DIALOGUES,

BETWEEN

STUDENTS

AT THE

COLLEGE; WHICH CONTAIN A

DEFENCE OF THE

LEADING DOCTRINES

OF

CHRISTIANITY:

ALSO SHEWING

Their Tendency to promote Holineſs;

INTERSPERSED WITH

Philoſophical Obſervations.

By JOHN ROGERS, *M. A.*

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INTRODUCTION.

A Correct and elegant Author obſerves, " That a " writer juſtly obtains the approbation of all " men; who, in his compoſitions, unites the pleaſant " and the profitable." If Authors ſtudy only to pleaſe the corrupt heart, inattentive to the edification of their readers, they adminiſter ſweet poiſon; pallatable indeed, but deadly: and, with books of this ſort the preſent time abounds ſo much, that there can be no other excuſe for adding to the number, than the needy convenience of an author, chiefly ſolicitous to profit by his works. On the other hand: If the uſeful only be ſtudied, 'tis more than probable that the beſt intentions of the writer will be defeated, in an age, when men are too prone, to ſacrifice the intereſts of their immortal ſouls, at the low ſhrine of ſenſuality.

According to this plan, an Author is at liberty to communicate his ideas, in any form of compoſition, that he thinks moſt ſuitable to his abilities; and tho' he cannot pretend to entertain the curious ſcholar; yet if

if he can instruct the sincere Christian, he doth not labour in vain. Men may misapply their talents, and affect a style and plan which nature never designed for them. How few can arrive at the knowledge of two or three Sciences, so as to speak of them with sufficient intelligence, or understand them with equal clearness! There are fewer still, who can take up different modes of composition, and excel alike in them all: To obey the dictates of inclination may be pleasant; but, certainly, to follow the natural tendency, which abilities of every kind have to display themselves, is to take a wiser and safer part. Hence the elegant historian traces, through the intricacies of action, the complicated schemes of the cabinet, and warns and instructs a present generation by the mistakes, the calamities, and the false heroism of the past. Nor less succesfully does poetry captivate the human imagination, reaching a reproof to prevailing vice, in pointed satire; or it may be extorting compassion for imaginary distress. Hence instructive fables and emblematical figures give words to Beasts, and sensibility to vegitable nature. In like manner, familiar dialogues introduce persons, of opposite dispositions and principles, who, alternately raising and answering objections, must afford more clearness than a regular uninterrupted treatise.

These considerations induced the Author of the following sheets to choose a path which he has already trodden, rather than attempt a new track, merely for the sake of novelty: not presuming that he shall gain universal approbation. And tho' objections have been raised, and may, upon his second attempt, be repeated, viz. " That it begins and ends with falshood," insinuating that there were no such disputants; but he must inform these cavilliers, that they only discover their ignorance of the nature of dialogues: for this objection is equally applicable to antient and modern writers, from *Lucian* down to *Swift* and *Hervy*. In all these, the Authors invented names and ordered circumstances, in such a manner, as they thought most proper to ellucidate their subjects, without prejudice to the useful truths which are contained in their diologues.

The

The Spirit of God alſo, a more noble precident, in divine revelation, uſeth parables, dialogues, emblems &c. as vehicles for divine truths, aſcribing motion and voice to inanimate objects, as to the vine, the fig-tree and the bramble. *Judges*, ix. 18.—21.

It is *ſuppoſed*, that the ſcene of the following dialogues was at the College of Glaſgow; There, and at other Colleges in Scotland, the Youths deſigned for Diſſenting Clergymen generally finiſh their education: and there no oaths are exacted, which, in that reſpect, certainly, makes it more eligible than ſome other Colleges. To me, indeed, it appears abſurd to extort oaths from lads, who are ſtudying only the languages and Philoſophy. Our politicians and merchants, as far as the Author knows, tho' they ſpeak of the ballance of trade which is againſt us, yet never ſeem to obſerve the ſums of ſpecie which are every Year carried out of this Kingdom by ſtudents never to return, either in money or goods: As there is no room for Diſſenters, in Dublin College, would it be impolitic in the ſtate to encourage eminent Profeſſors, in every Science, to open a College in ſome town in the north? And, in proceſs of time, Foreigners might come alſo; as frequently Ruſſians, Genevans &c. &c. have come to the College of Glaſgow. IF THIS BE NOT THE DUTY OF THE LEGISLATURE; Noblemen, Gentlemen and Clergy, by ſubſcription, might raiſe a competency for Profeſſors, books and apparatus. There would be no occaſion for large buildings; but only a few halls for the claſſes to meet in; for the ſtudents might lodge in private houſes, as they do in Glaſgow.

John and Thomas, two young men from Ireland, having met in the area of the College of Glaſgow, after the diſmiſſion of the Greek claſs, agreed to go to James's room; as he had lately entered the College, and his Father had requeſted, that they would direct him in his ſtudy: Having waited on James there they had the following converſation.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE I.

JOHN, a *Divine.*

JAMES, a *Young Student.*

THOMAS, a *Philosopher.*

JOHN. How do your studies advance, James? We are sent by our parents to the College, who spare neither trouble nor expence; and they fondly hope that we will be a comfort to them, and a blessing to our country.

James. I have lately applied myself to my books, with the greatest diligence; and have punctually attended the classes: but, alas! I am like a person in midnight darkness, having neither moon nor star to point out the way; and, now, when I have an inclination to learn, I cannot.

John. What obstructs your progress? I observe that you constantly attend the lectures, and frequent neither the Theatre nor Tavern: yet you do not answer upon examination, as might be expected from a lad of your talents and application.

James. Ah! John, the foundation was not properly laid; and I cannot raise the superstructure. My masters were not capable of teaching me in a proper manner: when they taught me a few quirks in grammar, to write a latin Exercise, and to interpret the authors, in such incorrect English, as a common artist would be ashamed of, they imagined they had done their duty: but they neither taught me to write English gramatically, nor to read it properly: and they advised my father to send me to the College, before I was fit for it: and I find it impossible to get the les-

ſons, even in Latin and Greek, which the Profeſſors explain; much leſs the lectures on Logic.

John. I am fully convinced of the truth of what you obſerve. I am glad, however, that you are ſenſible of the defect of your education. You are young, and by diligent application to, and a bleſſing upon your ſtudies, you may ſurmount theſe difficulties: but deſpair excludes hope, relaxes induſtry and freezes the faculties. I have often lamented, that the plan of education in moſt of our ſchools, is rather calculated to form conceited pedants, than ſolid and rational ſcholars. In ſome ſchools, where there are prope masters it may be otherwiſe. Some maſters can teach boys grammar and proſody, and to turn Engliſh into Latin, who never ſet them to write letters, themes, or any compoſitions in Engliſh It is too common, therefore, to find a man, who could write a page of latin correctly, yet were he to write a letter to a friend, nothing but pride and ignorance would prevent him from bluſhing at the paltry and incorrect performance.

James. You are perfectly right: how often are the boys in our claſs fined, becauſe they do not give in their themes upon Saturday? I am certain the reaſon is this, that they cannot: but if their maſters had inured them to write letters, themes, or any kind of compoſitions in Engliſh; they would thereby have been prepared for Colledge exerciſes—and had they taught them to read with propriety

Thomas. READ WITH PROPRIETY! they cannot do that themſelves: If boys would ſtudy their intereſt, and uſefulneſs in the world, they would go to proper perſons to teach them to read, and thereby to form their delivery for the pulpit. How often do indifferent ſermons, properly delivered pleaſe; when the moſt elaborate diſcourſes, delivered with rapidity, or interrupted with contracted hems and coughing, are diſguſting? we have above five hundred lads at the College this year; and I verily believe, that the tithe of them know not how to read a chapter in the bible, with proper accents and emphaſis. As for my part, I intend to go to ſchool, in vacation to learn to read Engliſh.

John.

John. I approve of your resolution: It might be expected, that boys, who have a liberal education, should read correctly, but, generally, they read more incorrectly than good english scholars. They having been accustomed to repeat grammar, and other things with rapidity, paying no regard to accent, emphasis and cadence, have contracted vitious habits which are not easily eradicated. Their ignorant and indulgent masters also permit them to read the classicks, in a careless manner: and the scholars, being busy in recollecting the English of the words in the lesson, do not attend to their reading; so that a common clerk, in a merchant's shop, or a young lady can read more gracefully and correctly than many lads after their College course is finished.

Thomas. I wish that every master would endeavour to remedy these palpable evils, They should never tolerate their pupils to say a lesson, which they have not perfectly learned. I knew a master, (but alas! he is dismissed from his labour) who would turn off the boys, if they wanted one sentence of their lessons: but, before they came to say them, he would explain any difficult word or sentence. He also gave them chapters in the Bible, to commit to memory, which they repeated in an audible manner; and, by this and his corrections, he formed their delivery for the pulpit, the bar, or the senate.

John. This is my fifth year at the College: I have gone thro' a course of philosophy; and am now studying divinity; but in my opinion, greater care is taken to make us philosophers than divines. In philosophy we are examined almost every day, but in divinity never. The professor of divinity, I grant, gives us a subject for a sermon, or lecture; which, for aught he knows of our abilities, others may compose for us; and we may read in the public hall. This is all the specimen he hath of our abilities; unless we choose to make critical remarks upon the discourses of others, when they deliver them in the hall. As the soul, certainly, is preferable to the body, and divinity preferable to philosophy; so professors of divinity ought to examine, exhort and direct their students indi-

 vidually,

vidualy, as well as deliver their public lectures.

Thomas. A young man informed me, that the professor of divinity, appointed by the Seceders examines his students almost every day, during the session.

John. He doth so: and also instructs them in Calvinist principles, which are the principles of all the reformed Churches; as appears from their respective confessions, creeds and articles of Faith: but, in this College, the advantages and disadvantages of the Calvinist and Armenian scheme are laid before us; as if it were a matter of indifference which we choose: Just as if a merchant would lay down two pieces of cloth to his customers, and say, this is finer, that is coarser, take which you please: and I have heard two young men deliver each a sermon, on opposite systems, and the professor commend both, which to me appeared most absurd.

Thomas. Indeed, John, I neither know what is Armeniasm, nor Calvinism: nor did I imagine that you understood either; for I have not seen you attend the hall upon the Lord's day; and I, therefore, concluded that you were indifferent about religion.

John. I am sorry to hear that you are ignorant of the principles of christianity, and of the different systems which in our times, obtain: but am glad that you confess your ignorance, it is a sign that you will use means to remove it. Nothing less than divine inspiration can make students understand divinity; who vainly expect that a few weeks, in a winter or two, will make them divines. Truth is gradualy discovered; we must, therefore, intensely apply ourselves to reading the scriptures and good books; attend the best preachers; and pray earnestly to God, that by his divine spirit he would lead us into all truth according to the scriptures; that we may receive them upon a divine testimony: if we believe any system, "because it is adopted by learned or holy men, our "Faith stands in the wisdom of men" not "in the "power of God." Though I do not meet with the professors and students in the College hall, upon the Lords' day; yet I attend divine worship in a Church, where I am better edified. 1. *Cor.* ii. 5.

Thomas.

Thomas. Whom do you attend.

John. Formerly I attended Mr. Legalist: His fine *moral* discourses resembled the lectures which we hear upon moral philosophy. His correct and flowry composition, his rounded periods, his figures and tropes, set off with the most graceful delivery, charmed me: I thought he pointed out the road to true happiness: yet his sermons left no lasting impression upon my heart: but in the close of the last session, by the persuasion of a pious lad I went to hear Mr Evangelist; the novelty of his subject, the plainess of his discourse, and the fervency of his address, at first, attracted my attention; and before he ended, I forgot the man. He laid open the wickedness of my heart and life, and applied his discourse so powerfully to my conscience, that I came from sermon under great trouble of mind.

Thomas. Is he that minister, who hath so much gravity in his carriage, and something forbidding in his aspect? I hear he makes very free with men's characters in the pulpit: I suppose, he is not an agreeable companion; he must damp the mirth of every company where he is: but I believe that few of any spirit relish his conversation.

John. Ah! Thomas, you are as I once was; you dislike the friendly conversation and salutary reproofs of godly ministers: but they must preach against the errors and immoralities, that prevail in their congregations; for if any of their hearers perish through their negligence, their blood will be required at their ministers hand. To sinners Mr. Evangelist is terrible: but to saints his conversation is always profitable, and frequently cheerful and entertaining. *Ezekiel*, iii. 18.

Thomas. It may be so: pray what was his subject, the day in which the young man took you to hear him?

John. In the morning, his text was, "Fools "make a mock at sin." He observed, "that a man "would be pronounced a fool, who would burn houses, "murder men, ravish women and laugh at his wicked-"ness, saying he did it for sport; such an apology would "not exculpate him at a human bar, nor prevail with "Judge or Jury to grant him a pardon: but that men "who wound their souls by sin, casting about firebrands,

" arrowsand death, and ſay all theſe things were done in " jeſt, were more hardened than ſatan, who believed " and trembled." Then all the miſchievous things which I did at home and at ſchool, came ruſhing into my mind. As my Father beat me without mercy; ſo my Mother would conceal my faults and often laugh at my merry tricks, by which I was encouraged. In the evening, his text was, " The wages of ſin is death. " He expatiated upon the evil nature of ſin, " That it deſt- " royed ſoul and body; ſtained our character; impaired " our ſubſtance; inſulted the Almighty; deprived us of " inward comfort and outward peace; That it brought " on all evils, internal, external and eternal: that it ex- " pelled the Angels from Heaven; brought the wrath " of God, the rage of Satan and the malice and cruelty " of men upon Chriſt, when he was a ſacrafice for ſin." He alſo added, " That every ſoul, that lived and died " under the guilt and power of ſin muſt be ſeut to " Hell." He likewiſe expoſed the vices of gaming and drunkenneſs, to which I was addicted, ſo that I reſolved, to alter my principle and practice. *Prov.* xiv. 5. *Rom.* vi. 23.

Thomas. Was that the reaſon, that you would not drink beer at the porters; nor make one of the party laſt week, at cards: I ſuppoſe not; probably you ſoon forget Mr. Evangeliſt's ſermons. I have frequently been affected at ſermon; but witty books and cheerful company ſoon ſtifled my convictions.

John. I immediately quited gaming and drunkeneſs, and all my merry tricks; and, then, I immagined that I was in the right road to Heaven: but going again to hear Mr. Evangeliſt, he preached on, " Ceaſe to do " evil, learn to do well." From it he obſerved, " That we muſt not only abſtain from ſin, but alſo comply with duty." Then I began to read and pray; and when I could not get time to pray in the morning; I thought, by praying double the time in the evening, I would attone for the omiſſion in the morning. *Iſaiah*, i. 17. 18.

Thomas. According to that plan, you might faſt one day and eat double food the next; or go naked one day, and wear double cloaths the next; but you were under a deluſion; for a Saint " Shall be like a

" tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth " his fruit in his ſeaſon. " *Pſalms*, i. 3.

John. Your remark is juſt: I went again to hear Mr. Evangeliſt, He preached on, " Bodily exerciſe " profiteth little." From it he obſerved " That all our external duties avail little, unleſs we perform them with the heart; that few knew the wickedneſs of their own hearts; but vainly imagined that, by the cultivation of their natural abilities, they might purchaſe eternal life. *Tim.* iv. 8.

Thomas. We need the grace of God: but he is a merciful being, and if we improve our natural talents, he will confer upon us grace and glory.

John. Your opinion is natural to carnal men: they acknowledge that God is merciful, without remembering that he is alſo juſt and holy; and " will by no " means clear the guilty:" but in a way conſiſtent with his juſtice and holineſs. I then imagined that, by my diligence in outward duties, I would recommend myſelf to the divine favour: but having heard Mr. Evangeliſt preach from *Gal.* iii. 10. " Curſed is every " one that continueth not in all things, which are writ- " ten in the book of the law to do them." He opened up the ſpiritual extent of God's law; and ſhewed, " That as a covenant of works it would accept of no- " thing leſs than perfect obedience: that Jeſus Chriſt, in " the room of his people, had to give perfect obedience: " to the law as a covenant; that, if divine juſtice could " remit any part of the obedience or puniſhment, it might " remit the whole: and upon this ſuppoſition, Chriſt's " death was unneceſſary." I returned from ſermon under great trouble of mind; and reſolved to watch over my thoughts, words and actions: I alſo made vows and promiſes to keep God's law, and as often broke them: but always hoped, that by ſorrow for the paſt ſins, and a reſolution to do better for the future, I might move God to love and pity me.

Thomas. Repentance intitles us to God's love.

John. Repentance is a duty; but not the cauſe of pardon: it is neceſſary in ſanctification to make us fit for Heaven; but is not the price of our ſalvation: yet ignorant men aſcribe more to repentance, than can be aſcribed to the death of Chriſt, viz, " That it pur-

"chaſeth God's love;" for Chriſt is a gift of God's love and not the cauſe of it. God's love is the ſpring of all bleſſings, and Chriſt the channel through which they deſcend. Repentance is the gift of God; a grace wrought in the heart by the ſpirit of God; and cannot make attonement for our ſins. And ſuppoſe we could live perfectly free of ſin, the preſent time requireth the preſent duty; and the old ſins, of which every one deſerveth eternal wrath, are upon record againſt us. If we expect ſalvation for our works, the law ſays, "Pay me that thou oweſt." *Mat.* viii 28.

Thomas. How were you delivered from this diſtreſs?

John. I heard Mr. Evangeliſt preach from "Believe "on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved." This opened a door of hope: but I knew not what *ſaving* Faith was; only, I believed the ſcriptures, and therefore, concluded, that *this belief* would recommend me to the divine favour. *Acts*, xvi. 31.

Thomas. A Deiſt, who denies the ſcripture, rejects Jeſus Chriſt; and conſequently is not in the way, to happineſs.

John. Ah! Thomas, the Devils believe that the ſcriptures are the word of God: but a ſaving Faith receives and reſts upon Chriſt alone for ſalvation, as he is offered in the goſpel. It receives Chriſt's perſon, righteouſneſs and grace; it lives upon him, and claims him in every character, whereby he is deſcribed in the Bible. I then reſolved to do what I could to pleaſe God; and hoped that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt would make up my deficiency. Under this deluſion, for ſome time, I remained; untill Mr. Evangeliſt took for his text, "Even we have believed in Jeſus "Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the Faith of "Chriſt, and not by the works of the law: for by the "works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified." He told us; "That ſome men vainly imagined, that they might "divide the work with Chriſt, and make up a patch-"work righteouſneſs, to juſtify them before God: and "would only call in his help as an under worker: that "their faith did not make Chriſt a juſtifier of their *per-"ſons*, but of their *works*; and of their *perſons* for "their

" their *works sake*; consequently they rejected Christ; " for he would be a whole Saviour or none. That a " believer disclaimed all his qualifications and good " works, as filthy rags, and as loss and dung: that being " convinced, by the law of his lost condition, he flies to " Jesus, and accepts his righteousness, as the only de- " fence against the wrath and curse of God, and as his " certain title to eternal happiness." *John*, i. 12. *Isaiah*, lxvi. 6. *Phil.* iii. 8. 9. *Gal.* ii. 16.

Thomas. I know that Paul says, " That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." But James declares " that faith without works is dead." " That Rahab the harlot was justified by works— " And Abraham our Father was justified by works." " Ye see then how that by works a man is justified " and not by faith only." *Rom.* iii. 18. *James*, ii. 18. 19.

John. As the spirit of God cannot contradict himself; so, any supposed contradiction in the scriptures, ariseth entirely from our ignorance of them. James, therefore, must speak of a justification which is different from the one Paul describes. Paul treats of the justification of our *persons before God*: James of the justification of *our faith before men*. Faith without works justifies *our persons* before God: works justifies *our faith* before men. " I will *says James*, shew thee my faith by my works." q d. There is no way whereby men can know that we have Faith, but by our works; and it is a dead Faith which doth not produce them. " The tree is know by his fruit." *Math.* xii. 33.

Thomas. I believe that doctrine hath been fatal to many souls, let them but imagine they have Faith, and that it without works will justify them, then, they will commit sin, and omit duty.

John. If they only *imagine* they have Faith, it will be the case: but if they *really* have Faith it will be otherwise. A saving Faith works by love—purifies the heart—resists Satan - overcomes the world—and is strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. They, who abuse the doctrines of God's word, have no true Faith. That the doctrine of justification by

Faith

Faith hath been abuſed, I will not deny: but there is a vaſt difference between the *uſe* and *abuſe* of any thing. Riches are abuſed in promoting luxury: will you, therefore, aſſert they do not exiſt; nor are of any uſe to men? If the goſpel be the ſavour of death unto death to unbelievers; muſt we therefore, conclude that it is not to be received, and will not be the ſavour of life unto life to believers? The abſurdity of ſuch reaſoning is obvious to any inteligent perſon. It is men's corruption, that abuſes the Goſpel. *Acts*, xv, 9. *John*, v. 4 2 *Cor* ii 16.

Thomas. If Faith enables us to reſiſt Satan &c. &c. it muſt be a work; and being juſtified by Faith we muſt be juſtified by works

John. " Faith juſtifies a ſinner in the ſight of " God, not becauſe of theſe other graces which do " always accompany it, or of good works that are the " Fruits of it, nor as if the grace of Faith, or any " act thereof, were imputed to him for his juſtifi- " cation; but only as it is an inſtrument by which " he receiveth, and applieth Chriſt and his righteouſneſs." Faith is only a hand that receives the medicine, it is not the hand, but the medicine that heals. It receiveth the garment of righteouſneſs, not Faith but the garment covers our nakedneſs. All the titles given to Faith, in the Bible, plainly ſhew that Faith takes its virtue from its object, Chriſt Jeſus. Men never will have a clear view of the goſpel ſcheme, unleſs they know how to diſtinguiſh between juſtification and ſanctification. In the former grace wrought in us, or works done by us, cannot have the leaſt ſhare: but in the latter it is not ſo. I would earneſtly recommend Erſkine's and Fiſher's large, and Brown's larger and leſſer explications of our ſhorter Chatechiſm to your peruſal; where among other things, you will find in what reſpects juſtification and ſanctification agree, and wherein they differ. I ſhall only repeat one queſtion, and the anſwer to it. out of the larger Catechiſm. Q. " Wherein do juſtification and ſanctification differ? A. " Although ſanc- " tification be inſeperably joined with juſtification, " yet they differ, in that God in juſtification impu-

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" teth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification " his spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exer- " cise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in " the other it is subdued; the one doth equally free " all believers from the revenging wrath of God, " and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall " into condemnation; the other is neither equal in " all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up " to perfection." *Larger Cat. Quest.* 73 *and* 77.

Thomas. I am glad that I interrupted you, as, now, I understand better than I did Mr. Evangelist's remarks upon the last text, which you mentioned. How did your trouble end?

John. I never came to any perfect ease in mind, untill I was brought to deny my best duties, as insufficient to obtain pardon of sin, and a title to Heaven. The means which God used to accomplish this end was a sermon delivered from that comfortable text; " I, " even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for " mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Oh! the text and sermon were sweet. Like light to those that sit in darkness; or life and pardon to a condemned criminal. I was clearly convinced of the sovereignty of God's grace; the freeness of pardon through Christ; that this plan exalted the perfections and law of God. Upon the perfect righteousness of my once crucified, and now glorified Redeemer, I have rested my soul to this day, and for ever will; glory to his name. *Isa.* xliii. 23.

Thomas. I have attended to the minute account, you have given of your conversion. You speak of inward feelings of joy and sorrow, of hope and fear, so that I really apprehend that you are under a delusion; to me all this inward work appears perfect enthusiasm.

John You might have justly accused me of enthusiasm, if I had told you of unscriptural revelations, strange impulses, delusive dreams, or visible appearances of Christ, hanging upon the cross, &c. &c. &c. But I do not depend upon any internal work, or extraordinary revelation for my salvation; this would be to build upon the sand. I found my title to grace and glory, upon the perfect righteousness of a crucified redeemer.

redeemer. Let you and I, however, obſerve that, by his ſpirit, we muſt be made meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light; for thoſe whom he juſtifies by his righteouſneſs, he alſo ſanctifies by his gracious ſpirit, whoſe fruits are love, joy, peace, longſuffering, &c. but the fruits of enthuſiaſm are diametrically oppoſite to theſe; a party ſpirit, ignorant zeal, a perſecuting diſpoſition, and a weak ill informed judgment, which raſhly determines upon the eternal ſtate of thoſe, who differ from, and will not receive the noſtrums of fanaticks, are the badges of enthuſiaſm. It hath been, however, the practice of men, deſtitute of real religion, to traduce the ſaving opperations of God's ſpirit, upon the hearts of ſaints, as enthuſiaſtical; "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs to him, neither can he know them, for they are ſpiritually diſcerned." You muſt not, therefore, my dear Thomas, cry down the gifts and graces of God's ſpirit as enthuſiaſtical. There is a real power in religion, which transforms the ſoul into God's image, giveth it a reliſh for divine things, and makes it look, not upon things that are temporal, but upon things that are eternal. The grace of God will make a man content with poverty; take up his croſs and follow Chriſt, even to the fire or ſcaffold; yea, to glory in tribulation. Upon ſecond thoughts, I hope you will retract your opinion; and diſtinguiſh between a real work of grace, and the ſatanical deluſion of enthuſiaſm. 1 *Cor.* ii. 4.

Thomas. I beg your pardon; It is not ſafe to judge of things of which we are ignorant. I ſubmit myſelf to your better judgement. I ſuppoſe you have profited greatly by Mr. Evangeliſt. I am not ſurpriſed that you love him: But, John, how ſhall I be able to form a judgement of the ſermons which I hear, and to know whether the miniſter is orthodox or hetredox?

John. I love Mr. Evangeliſt for his work's ſake, and for his maſttr's ſake; and indeed, I am afraid that I idolized him; for he was nothing but the inſtrument in God's hand. "Paul may plant, and Apollos "water, but God gave the increace." I am very willing

ling to give you ſome marks, by which you may try a miniſter's ſermons. (1) He degrades the ſinner, (2) He exalts the Saviour, (3) And endeavours, in all his ſermons, to promote real holineſs 1 *Cor.* iii 6.

Thomas. Explain your firſt mark, viz. " That a ſound miniſter, in his ſermons, degrades the ſinner." I know that there are ſome miniſters, who love the dark ſide of every picture; and indeed, degrade human nature, as if it were capable of nothing. They repreſent men as meer machines, and not moral agents.

John. We can do nothing without the Almighty's aſſiſtance: As we muſt receive a principle of life from him, before we can live, move, or perform any natural action; ſo we muſt receive a principle of grace or ſpritual life from him, before we can perform any ſpiritual action, in a right manner. By our natural talents, we certainly are capable of wonderful improvements, in arts and ſciences; and, even, in the knowledge of religion; but unleſs we derive grace from God, we can do no act of worſhip, in an acceptable manner. For without Faith, which is God's gift, we cannot pleaſe him. We may poliſh braſs, and make it reſemble gold; but our poliſhing will not alter its nature and turn it into gold. Poliſh nature by education or any other method, which the wit of man can deviſe, it is nature ſtill; and without grace we are enemies to God. " For the carnal mind is enmety againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." A goſpel preacher, therefore, will lay open the plagues of the heart; viz. unbelief, carnality, formality, malice, legality, hypocriſy, discontentment and every other evil diſpoſition; " For the heart is decitful above all things and deſperately wicked, who can know it." How different is the preaching of an erroneous miniſter; who harangues about the man of a good heart; not informing you, that regenerating grace is neceſſary to change our deſperately wicked hearts: And he will preſs reformation of heart and life, as if a man by his own power could change his heart and practice. *Heb.* xi. 6. *Jer.* xvii. 9. *Rom.* viii. 7.

Thomas.

Thomas. I underſtand your firſt mark of a ſound miniſter. That he will not only ſpeak *to* the heart, but *of* the heart. And point out the wickedneſs of it. But what do you mean by the ſecond mark. "That he exalts the ſaviour." Muſt he always preach about the ſufferings of Chriſt, and neglect other important truths delivered in the holy Bible?

John. I mean that he ſhould not "ſhun to declare the whole counſel of God;" Let his ſubject be what it will, that he ſhould improve it in ſuch a manner, as to exalt Chriſt, and lead ſinners to him as the only ſaviour. To preach truths, the greateſt truths, in a detatched manner; without pointing out their connection with the perſon of Chriſt, is to act like a painter; who can draw a hand or a foot: but could not finiſh the picture of a man; for, however, beautiful the hand or foot may be; they loſe their beauty and uſefulneſs, if they are not connected with the head and heart, the ſeat of life; ſo let this, or that truth be of ever ſo great importance; they looſe in a great meaſure, their uſefulneſs and beauty, if they be not viewed in connection with Chriſt. The ſcheme of ſalvation is a chain of bleſſings, of which election is the firſt, and glorification the laſt link; of which every one is connected with the perſon and offices of Chriſt our mediator. We are choſen in him, united to him, ſaved by him; and are bleſſed in him, in whom the nations are bleſſed.'

Thomas. Your obſervations may be true: But if you pleaſe, give me a few inſtances of ſome truths, that may, at firſt ſight, appear to have no connection with Chriſt, and ſhew that they have; and, then, I may underſtand what you mean.

John. Your requeſt I moſt cheerfully grant: Suppoſe, that a miniſter enlarges upon the ſpiritual extent of the divine law; and aſſerts that no man can perfectly fulfil its precepts, nor ſatisfy its threatnings; and, therefore, that he falls under its curſe. Moſt alarming truth, in a detatched view! unleſs he tells us that "Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe," "That he is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth;" and thus, the law is a

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ſchool-maſter to lead us to Chriſt. If he ſhews that we are polluted, guilty, diſeaſed, weak, ignorant, &c. he will alſo diſcover Chriſt as a fountain, righteousneſs, phyſician, ſtrength and wiſdom to free us from all theſe evils. A goſpel miniſter will ſet forth Chriſt as the ſcriptures repreſent him; viz, to be the center of every truth, and the ſum of every ordinance. For without him, the beſt compoſition, and moſt graceful delivery is, but as "a ſounding braſs and tinkling "cymbal." He will point out the righteouſneſs of Chriſt as the meritorious cauſe of every ſaving bleſſing; and the love of God, and union to Chriſt, as the ſource of every grace; by which we are qualified for ſerving God acceptably; and for bearing the croſs courageouſly. On the other hand. An unſound miniſter, or an ignorant one, unacquainted with the ſcheme of ſalvation, may preach upon the mortality of the body, the immortality and immateriality of the ſoul, future rewards and puniſhments, in a dry manner, without leading guilty ſinners to the great atonement. Sometimes, indeed, at ſacrament ſeaſons, he may give you a tragical account of the bodily ſufferings of Jeſus; and, in glaring colours, paint the cruelty of the Jews; the treachery of Judas, and the cowardice of Peter: but not one word of his ſoul's ſufferings, the wrath of God, which he bore for us. He may acknowledge that Chriſt died for us; that is for our good, and yet will not acknowledge that he died for us; that is, in our law room: he will not declare that many, who acknowledge Chriſt to be the meſſiah; and yet do not receive and reſt on him alone for ſalvation, are worſe than the Jews, who crucified him; for they did not believe, that he was the promiſed ſeed, *Gal.* iii. 13. *Rom.* x. 4. 1 *Cor.* xiii. 2.

Thomas. What are the reaſons, that miniſters preach, in ſuch an inſiped manner; and do not endeavour to lead ſinners to Chriſt; or to preach the fundamental truths of the goſpel.

John. There may be many reaſons; the moſt obvious are, they are either *ignorant* of the truth; or have not *experienced its power*. Many preachers have been neglected by parents, miniſters and maſters,

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in their youth. At the grammar ſchool, it is too frequently imagined, that boys who have Latin and Greek to learn, have no time for divine ſubjects; they muſt not be compelled to learn explications of our catechiſms, as other engliſh ſchollars; and miniſters and parents, too often, encourage ſuch ſhameful negligence. How abſurd is this practice! juſt as if the merchant, the mechanic and farmer ſhould know more of the principles of religion, than thoſe, who are to fill the pulpit, They go to College, many of them, abſolutely ignorant of reformation principles; and error being more natural to the corrupt heart of man than truth, they drink it in imperceptibly. Many, I grant, may have not *experienced the power* of them: they have not received the truth in the love of it. Not "knowing the terrors of the Lord." they know not, how "to perſwade men;" having never experienced the comforts of the goſpel; they know not how to comfort others with the conſolations which they never have *experienced.* In the Moral Philoſophy claſs they learn their Divinity. 2 *Cor.* xv. 11.

Thomas. Stop: I think the moral philoſophy claſs the beſt in the College. It is calculated to open the underſtanding; and takes in the whole extent of duty. What excellent lectures are delivered on natural theology; upon the being, perfections, and operations of God! In Ethics, how are the cardinal virtues, juſtice, temperance, prudence and fortitude deſcribed! Diſintereſted benevolence, ſympathy, the moral ſenſe, &c. are explained. In Juriſprudence, all the different kinds of goverment, and the different relations in which men ſtand are pointed out! Our profeſſors have extracted the ſoul, the eſſence of what Cicero, Plato, Seneca, and Chriſippus &c, have ſcattered thro' their writings; and I heard one of them declare, that he got more good by it, than any other claſs in the College.

John. To a lad of good principles, that claſs may be very uſeful · but I aſſert, that to a lad of no principles, the Moral Philoſophy claſs is a very dangerous one. I was crediably informed, that the manner, in which that

clafs was taught about fifty Years ago, was the caufe, in fome meafure, of the defection in principles among the minifters, both in Scotland and Ireland. It is certain that the moral philofophers have faid many excellent things, upon the perfections and moral goverment of the divine being: But do they inform their ftudents, that God out of Chrift is a confuming fire? They fpeak of the moral virtues; but do they tell their pupils, that the true root of morality is love to God and man, and union to Jefus? that "without him we can do nothing?" Hear Chrift's own words, a better ground for our faith, than the teftimony of all the Moral Philofophers in the world. "As the branch cannot bear "fruit of itfelf, except it abide in the vine: nomore, "fays Chrift, can ye, except ye abide in me." without faith, which unites us to Chrift, and derives ftrength from him, all thefe moral virtues are, vaftly deficient: but flowing from faith are works of love. *John* xvi 4

Thomas. To fpeak, in that manner, would be to preach divinity, not to teach philofophy.

John. Alas! Thomas, are they not generally minifters, who are chofen to teach moral philofophy? When they are teaching, might they not give a caution to their ftudents, and fhew them its deficiency? Now in this clafs, the ftudents are examined three or four times every week, during the feafon; but, in the divinity clafs, they never are examined. And ftudents learning this before divinity, and better than they learn divinity; it is no wonder, that their fermons have a greater fimilitude to the writings of the heathen philofophers, than to the writings of the prophets and apoftles. Do you think, Thomas, that if the Stoicks and Epicureans were to hear our moral harranguers, that they would call them bablers?

Thomas. I do not think, that they would; for a great part of modern fermons refemble their writings.

John. But they called Paul a babler; becaufe "He preached Jefus, and the refurrection," man's fall and his recovery, union to Jefus. &c. &c. Truths which the wifdom of man could never dif-

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cover. For the world by wisdom cannot know God. *Acts*, xvii. 18.

Thomas. Proceed to the third mark. " That the doc-
" trines of orthodox divines lead to holiness."

John. I shall not enter upon that part, at this time; but, if you come to the disputing society tomorrow night, you will hear that point discussed between Saul and Paul.

Thomas. I know Saul, he is a great admirer of doctor Hutchinson's writings; whom he calls the honour of the Irish nation. He hath thoroughly digested Whitby's vindication of the five Armenian articles; and doctor Hoadly's sermons about the terms of acceptance with God: But I know not Paul: Is he that solitary mortal, who never sits in the croud; nor utters one word in the class, before the professor comes in?

John. You must not judge according to outward appearance; because he will not contend with idle boys about triffles; nor enter into vain conversation, he is reputed a blockhead. He doth not, indeed, attend the Theatre, or Tavern: but you see that he punctually attends the classes; and he is not only a very great schollar, and an able divine; but also hath the most exalted notions of piety and morality. And I question, if he has been fined for irregularity, or non-attendance, since he entered the College.

Thomas. I will thank you for introducing me into the society; if the time of their meeting doth not interfere with the classes. As we come to learn, so we should never omit one meeting of any class. I resolve to attend punctualy.

Jnhn. I commend your resolution. After the Greek Class is dismissed, we will meet, and I will introduce you. Farewell and be diligent at your studies.

THE END OF THE FIRST DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE II.

IT is obſervable, That the different heritics, who have ariſen in the Church, have been the occaſion of great advantage to the Church; becauſe the friends of truth, by intenſe application to ſtudy, reading the ſcriptures, and prayer, have attained greater knowledge; the ſpirit of God, in the uſe of theſe means, leading them into all truth according to the ſcriptures. Man in oppoſing one error may run into another, but this ariſeth from his pride, not looking earneſtly to God for direction. When two flints are ſtruck againſt each other fire is produced; when men keenly oppoſe each other their judgements and inventions are exerted and they make diſcoveries, which otherwiſe they never might have found. A laudable deſire of acquiring knowledge, induced lads, who adapted very different ſyſtems, to form themſelves into a diſputing ſociety, that they might know what could be ſaid for and againſt their particular opinions; and there they have an opportunity of exerciſing their talents, and of qualiſying themſelves for ſpeaking with judgement and a becoming confidence upon different ſubjects. To one of theſe ſocieties John introduced Thomas and James, ſome of the members being met before Saul and Paul had come, the converſation took the following turn.

James. Was not this morning's lecture upon Logic very uſeful, the common people imagine, that we read logic with this deſign, that we may be able to induce men to believe whatever we pleaſe, whether true or falſe: but I now underſtand that "logic "teacheth the right uſe of reaſon in acquiring and in "communicating knowledge," and alſo informs us how to detect every ſophiſtical, and inconcluſive argument, an antagoniſt may make uſe of. Thomas, you were at this morning's lecture, and as this is your ſecond year, at the logic claſs, you are better qualified than I am, be pleaſed to inform theſe gentlemen of the ſubſtance of this morning's lecture.

Thomas. The profeſſor ſpake of the rules of ar-

guing, in a very judicious manner. He told us, "that we must not reason from the *Species* to the "*Genus*." That an animal is a *Genus* including every *Species* of living creatures: but if man hath a rational and an immortal soul, we must not therefore conclude, that horses, cows, &c. have immortal spirits, because one *Species* of living creatures viz. men have.

James. You are right. I remember that the professor said, that *Genus* was a general term, for every kind or *Species* of beings that came under that class, Tree is a general term for every *Species* of trees, of which some are fruit trees, but if some kinds or *Species* of trees bear fruit, we must not therefore, conclude that every tree is a fruit bearing tree; for that would be to reason from the Species to the Genus. There was another rule similar to the former, of which I have not a distinct idea. Pray favour us with an account of it.

Thomas It was "That from a particular to a uni-"versal, the conclusion doth not hold." As, I am a passionate, revengeful man, therefore, every man is passionate and revengeful.

John. I assure you, Thomas, few men study that rule as they ought; for if they did, it would prevent much slander and evil censuring. The practice is too common in the world, I mean, to reason from a particular to a universal. How often have we heard such reflections as these; such a minister is unsound, or ignorant, and so are the whole body with which he is connected!" "Such a member of such a Church is a "hypocrite, and so are all his party!" They might with equal propriety say, Judas was a traytor, and so were all the Apostles! How often, I say, have we heard uncharitable reflections, upon a whole congregation, or Church, for the misconduct of a few of their society.

James. Why, John, you have properly studied Logic, when you convert it to a moral use; at this rate, you would make Logic subserviant to divinity.

John. We should learn every science, with a design to promote God's glory and our own good; not only to prevent slander, but every kind of wickedness: As a certain person expresseth it, "We should bring

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all the arts and ſciences to the foot of Chriſt's croſs, and uſe them for his honour and glory." There is another kind of falſe reaſoning as culpable as the former. viz. To argue from a particular error of a man to his general character. Have you never heard, ſuch an aſſertion as this "If a man tells me a lie, I "will never believe him again." or "he has told me a lie, and I never will believe him again," If ſuch cenſorious men had lived, when Abraham denied his wife once, and again, when Joſeph ſwore his brethren were ſpies, or when Peter denied his Saviour, they would have condemned them, without benefit of clergy. According to their plan, not any man could get a good character given him before a Judge; for is there a man upon the ſurface of the Globe, who hath not, through the influence of fear, paſſion, prejudice, or the temptation of Satan, told a lie, or done an improper action? but the Judge in a criminal proſecution, when any perſon is called to give a character of the culprit at the bar, aſk him. "What is the general character of the priſoner at the bar?" Which imports, That we muſt eſtimate a man's character not from a ſingle action; but from his general deportment.

Thomas. The men who argue, in this manner; "He told a lie once, I never will believe him again," are generally perſons in exalted ſtations, or affluent circumſtances, (who are indulgent to their own vices, but unmerciful to the errors of others;) in order to excuſe their cruelty towards their dependants. Suppoſe a poor tenant may promiſe to pay his rent, or do ſome ſervice to his landlord, at ſuch a day, or a debtor, to pay his intereſt or principle to his creditor; and, by reaſon of poverty or ſome adverſe diſpenſation of providence, is rendered incapable of performing his promiſe: the landlord, or creditor makes this an occaſion of proceeding to the utmoſt ſeverity. Whereas this landlord, or creditor can eaſily pardon himſelf for ſeducing a young Virgin, betraying his truſt; or contrary to his promiſe, neglecting to pay his tradeſmen.

John. Your remarks are very judicious: We can ſee the mote in our brother's eye; but do not ſee the beam

beam in our own. We muſt, however, obſerve, That we are not advocates for lying, which is a baſe ſin; for every lie is a breach of Gods law; and whoever practiſes, and delights in it, gives evidence againſt himſelf, by his practice, that he is a child of the father of lies, the Devil. We are only ſhewing the cruelty of men to men, who ten thouſand's times offend God and are unmerciful to one another, Oh! that we would conſider the Lord's prayer, "forgive "us our debts as we forgive our debtors." But I ſee that Saul and Paul have come in. Let us hear what each can ſay in ſupport of his favourite ſyſtem.

Saul. Gentlemen, we have a full meeting to night; At our laſt, Paul and I having differed in our opinions, you wiſely enjoined us to defer our diſpute till our next meeting. But I perceive there are ſome ſtrangers.

John. Permit me to introduce theſe two young gentlemen, Thomas and James, who deſire to be admitted as members, they are ſober lads, and I hope none of you will object to their admiſſion.

All. By no means; your recommendation, John, is ſufficient.

Thomas and James. We thank you, gentlemen. We promiſe to be very peaceable and for ſome time, we dare ſay, ſilent members.

Saul. It was determined, at our laſt meeting, That Paul and I ſhould alternately offer and anſwer objections. You know, That I always aſſerted, that the belief of the doctrines of original ſin, imputed righteouſneſs, &c. opens the door for licentiouſneſs, and ſaps the foundation of piety and morality. And you alſo know, That Paul is of the contrary opinion: But before we enter upon this, we muſt ſettle two things; In what manner we ſhall diſpute, and to what Judge we ſhall appeal?

Paul. I heartily concur: As to the manner, let it be in the ſpirit of meekneſs. Scurrilous names, and uncharitable reflections are no arguments. When Michael, a holy Angel, was diſputing with the Devil, an impure ſpirit, about the body of Moſes, he durſt not bring againſt him a railing accuſation; and ſhall

we;

we poor ſinners dare to revile one another? As to the Judge, God is the ſovereign Judge of all, who knows our thoughts, words and actions. And hath a right to preſcribe what we are to believe and practiſe. We have his determinations in the Bible. " If *we* ſpeak not according to God's word, it is becauſe there is no light in us. The ſpirit of God ſpeaking in and by the ſcriptures, muſt be the Judge.

Saul. As to the manner, I agree that it ſhould be in the ſpirit of meekneſs. I have been tempted to think that preachers. eſpecialy young ones, have been preaching themſelves rather than Chriſt; when, with reproaches, and approbrious epithets they aſperſe thoſe who differ from them, and draw Inferences from their doctrines, which are not natural. The Apoſtles preached, in a plain manner, without railing; and if Peter told Simon, That he was in the gall of bitterneſs, or if Paul called Elymas, a child of the Devil, they did ſo by divine Inſpiration. Miniſters muſt preach againſt error and immortality, in the ſtrongeſt terms; but let them not preſume to ſit Judges upon the perſons of men, Shall we dare to call any man a child of the Devil, when we know not, but God may reclaim the greateſt ſinner. Let not the miniſter degrade himſelf beneath the gentleman. If a miniſter, in the beginning of his ſermon, before he has proved his doctrine, revile thoſe who differ from him in the point he wants to eſtabliſh; he prejudiceth all their favourites ſo that they will not candidly attend to his reaſoning: and 'tho " they have not judgement to underſtand, nor memory to retain one argument; yet they will eaſily remember the ſcurrilous epithets, which the preacher liberally beſtows upon his opponents. But as to the ſecond point, I perſume that reaſon is the Judge.

Paul. No man pays a greater regard to reaſon, in ſo far as it is well informed, than I do. But ſhe may be led aſtray, by her natural corruption, or education; ſhe may alſo be blinded by prejudice, paſſion, and ſelf intereſt. My reaſon may judge of things, that fall within her ſphere: but in religion ſhe is a very imperfect Judge, and can only judge in ſo far as ſhe

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is enlightened, by the word and ſpirit of God. Your watch is right, if it be regulated by the ſun: but you will not, therefore, argue that your watch and not the Sun regulates the day: Our reaſon, in like manner, rightly informed, by the word and ſpirit of God, may determine properly in certain things: But we muſt not, therefore, inſiſt that reaſon is the Judge: for that muſt be an imperfect Judge, which at different times gives different determinations.

Saul. Do you mean that reaſon, about the ſame thing, at different times, will give a different ſentence.

Paul. I do, And think ſhe is a very imperfect Judge of ſaving truths, And if our reaſon was rightly informed, ſhe herſelf would di claim the chair, and not arrogantly bring revealed truths to her bar. It is reaſonable to believe, That God knows more than we do; and it is perfectly conſiſtant with right reaſon, That we ſhould take God's word for things which we do not know. 'Tho revelation is not contrary to reaſon, yet it is far above reaſon. If reaſon was an equitable Judge, ſhe would paſs the ſame kind of judgement in every man: experience proves that this is not the caſe; for we find, that what one calls truth, another man calls hereſy, and he, who is accuſed of hereſy, chargeth his accuſer with idolatry, if reaſon was a proper Judge ſhe could not ſo palbably err, as is proved by fatal experience.

Saul. But, ſuppoſe, The ſcriptures ſhould be Judge, in what ſenſe ſhall we take them, for every ſect impoſe their opinions upon the ſcriptures, and moſt men read the ſcriptures, rather to find what may favour their opinions, than to regulate them, by the ſcriptures.

Paul. I do not ſay that the ſcriptures are to be the Judge; but the ſpirit of God ſpeaking in, and by the ſcriptures, now, the ſpirit of God cannot contradict himſelf. We muſt therefore explain ſcripture, by ſcripture, if one text is obſcure another explains it, and if we explain one text in ſuch a manner, as directly to contradict another, it is not the ſpirit ſpeaking in that text, but we perverting it.

Saul, Let then the ſpirit of God, ſpeaking in the ſcriptures, be the Judge. Deſcribe original ſin, and prove

prove that a belief of it tends to promote holineſs.

Paul. Original ſin is " The guilt of Adam's firſt " ſin, the want of original righteouſneſs, and the cor- " ruption of the whole nature; whence as ſtreams " from a fountain all actual tranſgreſſions proceed." In this definition two parts are contained; original ſin *imputed*, and original ſin *inherent*.

Saul. I grant that our nature is corrupted, in a certain degree, by the fall. But how abſurd is it to alledge, that the guilt of Adam's firſt ſin is imputed to his poſterity. This contradicts the word of God. *Ezekiel.* xviii. 2. " What mean you to uſe that pro- " verb; The fathers have eaten ſour grapes, and the " children's teeth are ſet on edge; as I live, ſaith the " Lord God, ye ſhall not any more have occaſion to " uſe this proverb.—The ſoul that ſinneth ſhall die."

Paul. Adam's ſin, which is imputed to us, is called, the diſobedience of one man; becauſe it is only Adam's firſt ſin, which is imputed to his poſterity: having broken the covenant of works, he ceaſed to be our federal repreſentative. But in the place, which you have quoted; the Prophet ſpeaks of Fathers and of ſins, in the plural number. He doth not, therefore, ſpeak of Adam; but of natural parents; whoſe ſins are not imputed to their poſterity; unleſs they make them their own, by imitating their vicious examples.

Saul. How is it conſiſtent with the moral perfections of the Deity to impute Adam's ſin to his offſpring; who is dead almoſt ſix Thouſand Years.

Paul. I already obſerved, that in the covenant of works, he was our federal repreſentative; and we ſinned in him, and fell with him in his firſt tranſgreſſion. " Wherefore by one man ſin entered into the " world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon " all men, for that all have ſinned." Obſerve all have ſinned in Adam, as if they had really in their own perſons eaten the forbidden fruit. We are bound by the laws, and are ſubject to the taxes agreed upon, by our repreſentatives in parliament.

Saul. Your alluſion is improper; becauſe we chooſe our Members of Parliament; but who choſe Adam to

be our representative? I know he broke God's command; but I deny that God made a covenant with him, in the name of all his posterity. Reason revolts at the Idea. *Rom.* v. 12.

Paul. The Idea, that a parent may covenant for his posterity, is not so irrational as you imagine. We have frequent examples of parents binding their heirs; tho' the heirs did not consent, yet they cannot reverse the obligation. Joshua, in the name of Israel, contracted with the Gibeonites; and if Saul endeavoured to nullify the covenant, by destroying them, ten of his offspring must be hanged, at the desire of the Gibeonites to avert the Lord's displeasure, and free the land of Israel from a dreadful famine. Hence it's evident, that Fathers can bind their heirs; and to deny it would have fatal effects; for all securities, mortgages, and marriage settlements, upon such a supposition, would be overturned.

Saul. Suppose I grant that parents can bind their heirs: yet how can you prove that God intended to make a covenant with Adam, as a representative? And that Adam knew this, and consented to the condition, these two things must be the case; otherwise all you have said must pass for nothing?

Paul. I shall attempt to prove both points; that God made a covenant with Adam—and that Adam consented to that covenant.

Saul. Keep these two points distinct; that I may follow you without confusion. First, prove that God made a covenant with Adam. There is no account of this covenant in Genesis.

Paul. If the mind of any person is delivered, in a concise manner, in one part of a writing; yet if it is more fully expressed, in another part of the same writing, by comparing one part with another, we perfectly discover his mind. In like manner let us read the scriptures, "All scripture is given by divine in-"spiration." *Hosea*, vi. 7. God speaking of Israel says, But they like men (in the original Adam) have transgressed the covenant. In Romans and in Gallatians, you have the two covenant heads, Adam and Christ contrasted. The disobedience of the former, as

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the cause of our misery; and the obedience of the latter, as the cause of our happiness, are declared. *Rom.* v. 17. 18. 19. There are but two covenants; of which the covenant of works is one, and the covenant of grace the other, mentioned in Gallatians; the covenant of works represented by Hagar's seed. The covenant of grace by Sarai's seed. The one from Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, the other from Jerusalem which is above and bringeth freedom. *Gal.* iv. 22 —28. It is also evident, that God made a covenant with Adam; because children, who do not sin; after the similitude of Adam, are exposed to the wages of sin, death. If children had no original sin, they would not be subjected to such dreadful diseases in infancy; as they never committed actual sin.

Saul. I do not deny, that our death is a consequent of Adam's eating the forbidden fruit. God said to him, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt "surely die." But is it, therefore, incumbent on me to grant that a covenant was made with Adam, because all men must die? *Gen.* ii. 17.

Paul. I will not now consider what was included in the threatning. I might shew, that it included in it, death in its utmost extent; death spiritual, temporal and eternal. From your concession, that our death is an effect of Adam's fall, I may fairly deduce this inference, that God made a covenant with Adam, as the representative of his posterity. For if there were not a covenant, how could death, in Justice, be inflicted upon his offspring? Death is the wages of sin, and, wherever death is inflicted, in all reason, we must conclude that the subjects of it, are in some respect, sinners. To deny this would be to accuse the Almighty of injustice; for by his justice, he is bound to defend the innocent, as well as to punish the guilty. "Shall "not the Judge of all the Earth do right."

Saul. Do not beasts daily die? Are they the subjects of sin?

Paul. The irrational creatures were formed for man's use; for Adam had dominion over the fowls of the air the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the field. Their death proves God's displeasure against man.

He now ſhews that he is diſpleaſed with the whole creation; which travelleth in pain to be delivered from its bondage to ſinful man. God, therefore, by the death of uſeful cattle, ſhews his hatred at man's ſin. And the beaſts, by death, are delivered from ſlavery. I humbly ſubmit, whether I have not proved that God made a covenant with Adam; becauſe the ſcripture declares it—and children who are not guilty of actual ſin, have the effects of Adam's ſin inflicted. I now proceed to prove that Adam agreed to that covenant. You muſt acknowledge; that God made Adam upright, that he was holy, and free from ſin. I would only aſk, Is not holineſs God's moral image? If Adam, therefore, was holy, he could not withhold his conſent. No party, with whom God enters into covenant, can be at liberty to refuſe his terms, or to propoſe terms to him, as in covenants between equals of mankind. God from the purity of his nature can propoſe no terms, but what are equitable; and conſequently, a pure and holy creature could not, yea would not, object to reaſonable terms. When Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, ſhe anſwered, in ſuch clear terms, as leaves it out of doubt, that Adam and ſhe alſo perfectly underſtood God's command. *Gen.* iii. 1 2 3. And knew that keeping the covenant entitled them to life, and that breaking of it expoſed them to death. Some ſpeculative heads have formed this Hypotheſis, that if the fallen Angels were to be redeemed, each of them would require a diſtinct Mediator, becauſe they did not fall in a covenant relation; for each ſinned, and each ſuffers. But as the breach of the covenant of works, by the firſt Adam, plunged himſelf and his poſterity into an eſtate of ſin and miſery; ſo the fulfilling of the condition of the covenant of grace, by Jeſus Chriſt the ſecond Adam reſtored his children into an eſtate of holineſs and happineſs.

Saul. How doth original ſin deſcend to all mankind? It cannot be by the body, which conſiſts of groſs matter. We have our bodies of the ſame maſs, of which the beaſts are formed. "Duſt thou art ſays "God, and unto duſt ſhalt thou return." Nor can

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ſin deſcend by the ſoul, for it is created by a holy God, and he cannot be the Author of ſin.

Paul. This is an old cavil of the Pelagians; It is, however, falſe reaſoning to ſay, I cannot explain this or that appearance in nature, therefore, ſuch things cannot exiſt. There are many things in nature, for which we can give no reaſon; ſuch as the power of the loadſtone, gravitation, &c. Yet no man will deny that the loadſtone attracts Iron to it; and that all heavy bodies fall to the ground. You know not how the ſoul and the body are united; and how they act and re-act upon each other: You will not, therefore, deny that your ſoul and body are united; and have upon each other, a very powerful influence. We can, however, give ſome account of the manner, in which original ſin is conveyed. It is by ordinary generation. Every creature begets a creature, poſſeſſed of ſimilar qualities. A ſinner begets a ſinner. Adam begat Seth after his own likeneſs: Obſerve the contraſt between Adam's creation, and Seth's generation. Adam was made after God's image, in knowledge, righteouſneſs and holineſs. But Seth was begotten after Adam's image. Why does the ſpirit mention Seth, and not Abel, or Cain? Had he mentioned Cain, it might be objected that he was a wicked and degenerate branch. Had he mentioned Abel, it might be objected he had no ſeed, and we could draw no inference from it. But Seth, the Father of the holy ſeed, was by nature a ſinner; a child of wrath as all his poſterity are. Adam did not repreſent our bodies, or our ſouls abſtractedly, but our perſons. And tho' there is no impurity in the ſoul, as God forms it; yet it is not adorned with grace as Adam's was; but created ſimply with natural faculties: Herein God is not to be conſidered, only as creator; but alſo as a juſt Judge; and he withholds that grace, which Adam forfeited, as a puniſhment of his firſt ſin. The ſoul being created in infuſion, and infuſed in creation; the moment the ſoul is united to the body, the human perſonality is conſtituted; and the perſon being a deſcendant of the firſt Adam, hath the guilt of his firſt ſin imputed to him; which muſt be attended with the want of original righ-

teousness, and the corruption of his nature.

Saul. Do you imagine, that a corruption of nature necessarily implies, that the subject of it must previously be chargeable with sin. That is an idea, that never occurred to my mind. I know many, who will deny the guilt of Adam's first sin; and yet acknowledge the corruption of the nature.

Paul. Certainly every disconformity to God's law, as well as every transgression, is a violation of the law: And when we see such corruption in our hearts, and in the first words and actions of children; we may justly conclude, that we are by nature, as well as by practice, sinners. I, now, proceed to prove that the human nature is corrupted. Scripture and rational arguments will establish this truth beyond all doubt. Hear the few following testimonies. Moses says, "That the imagination of man's heart is only evil, and that continually." David asserts, that God's testimony concerning man is, "They are altogether become filthy." Job, says "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." David confesses, "That he was conceived in sin." Christ declares, "That that which is born of the flesh is flesh." The necessity of regeneration implies natural corruption. Baptism administred to infants, under the new, and circumcision under the old testament, plainly import, that children need the blood of Jesus to cleanse them from sin; when these seals of his covenant are, and have been administred to them. Let us consult experience, and this doctrine of natural corruption to any considerate person must appear, as evident as the Sun Beams. The Heathens saw so much of man's depravity, that they readily acknowledged, that man is not now in that condition, in which God created him. Hence their inquiries into the origin of Moral Evil. And their vain Fable of Pandora's box, being opened, whence all evils issued. And their notion of two first beings. A good from whom all happiness, and an evil, from whom all misery proceeded. But glory to God, we, from scripture, may see that Adam's fall is the origin of all evil. I may add that this corruption is universal, extends not only to all men; but also to

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all in man, ſoul and body. How early do we ſee the workings of pride, covetouſneſs, revenge, and a contempt of, and an averſion from religion. A backwardneſs to ſubmit to the moſt uſeful inſtruction, and the moſt gentle correction! How prone to lying, and how ready to learn idle ſtories, and obſcene ſongs; but with what difficulty can they be taught the Lord's Prayer, or a Chapter of the Bible! In youth, what a ſtrong attatchment to luſt, luxury, gaming, diſimulation, and every ſpecies of diſſipation! How crowded are places of amuſement; but how few at the Church! They are all alive at the Theatre, and, for hours together, can hear profane Comedies; and yet, at Church, all the eloquence of the preacher, upon the moſt important ſubject, and in the awful preſence of the Almighty, cannot arreſt their attention, even for one hour! What ſcenes of impiety in ſecret, and daring acts of murder, robbery, &c. are committed in public! Object not, that when reaſon is ripened, men will act more uprightly. They, indeed, in the middle of life, may ſhift the ſcene: but they only relinquiſh one purſuit to follow another, and commence wordly, ſenſual or ambitious men. How doth the worldling lay ſchemes, and proſecute them, at the expence of health, conſcience, and a good name, living on the tears of widdows and orphans, diſregarding the cries of the miſerable! How doth the ambitious man, ſcaleing the ladder of preferment, ſtoop to low and abject flattery, and diſimulation to catch popular applauſe! And tho' from his character he cannot ſolicit to perjury; yet can wink at it in others, if it ſerve his ambitious deſigns. Or is he a ſenſualiſt, how does he glory in his intemperance, and ingenuity in drawing others into wickedneſs! Are the tables turned in old age? No, no; The ability of purſuing wickedneſs is in ſome meaſure abated; but the inclination to it is encreaſed! Murmuring and coveteouſneſs of the world, when they have loſt the power of enjoyment, ſtrongly mark the laſt ſtage of life, and are evidences of ſtrong corruption, inherent in man. Yea, the torrent of iniquity is ſo impetuous, that it bears down all oppoſition. Human laws enforced with the moſt ſevere penalties can't

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ſtem the current. Vows and promiſes, yea the moſt ſolemn oaths, are like Sampſon's burnt cords before the ſlighteſt temptation. Do not natural men prefer their bodies to their ſouls, time to eternity, the favour of men to the approbation of God, and the teſtimony of a good conſcience? If all the different kinds of vice, flow from a corrupt heart, muſt not our nature be corrupt? and that they do, appears from *Jer.* xvii. 9. "The heart (not this or that man's heart but "every unrenewed heart) is deceitful above all things "and deſperately wicked: who can know it?" And from *Mat.* xv. 19. "For out of the heart proceed "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, "theſts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies;" &c.

Saul. You have drawn the picture of human nature with a black pencil. The original can be found only among men of the moſt vicious principles, and moſt abandoned practices. All are not immerſed into ſuch abominations, as you have mentioned; except hardened ſinners, who have been corrupted by evil examples.

Paul. The queſtion is not, whether or not every man has actually every vicious principle, and has committed every act of wickedneſs: But whether the ſeed of all theſe is in his corrupt heart. As the acorn radically contains in it all the different parts of the tree; tho' every acorn doth not come to be a great oak; ſo every heart hath radically in it, the ſeed of every ſin. Every man, generally, hath ſome predominant ſin; ariſing from his conſtitution, cuſtom, calling, period of life, or ſtation, for this he makes proviſion. His corruption, in a great meaſure, running in that channel; other ſins do not appear. To uſe Pope's words, in proſe, this paſſion like Aaron's rod ſwallows up the reſt. If bad company make men more wicked, it certainly ariſeth from the corruption of their nature; to which bad precepts, and bad company are ſo agreeable. I grant there are many ſober, and virtuous men in the world; But who makes them to differ, from the reſt of their ſpecies? The Almighty, who hath, either by external providences, hedged up their way, that they cannot find their own paths; or,

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by renewing and conſtraining grace, hath changed their nature, and made them willing in a day of his power.

Saul. It is difficult to contradict facts. Vice is very prevalant, and almoſt univerſal. I think, however, it is a diſagreeable ſubject to dwell upon. How can you prove that a belief of this melancholy doctrine hath a tendency to promote holineſs; you know that was the chief deſign of our preſent converſation?

Paul. But I muſt explain what I mean by holineſs, leſt we be deceived, and take a part for the whole, or a ſhadow for the ſubſtance. "Holineſs is the having, "and exerciſing of every gracious and virtuous diſ-"poſition, in mortifying every luſt, and complying "with every duty, incumbent upon us in that ſtation, "in which adorable Providence hath placed us." Or in other words, "Holineſs is the mortifying every ir-"regular deſire, and complying with every duty, from "right principles and motives, out of obedience to "God's law, and a ſincere deſire to promote his glory."

Saul. I confeſs, your definition of holineſs hath ſo much the appearance of novelty; that I wiſh you would explain it, that I may underſtand it better; till then, I ſhall neither give, nor withhold my aſſent.

Paul. The genuine holineſs of God's people proceeds from right *Principles*: from *Knowledge*, for "They are all taught of God." From *Faith*, without which it is impoſſible to pleaſe God. From *Love*, to God and man, which is the fulfiling of the law. Conſequently their holineſs proceeds from a heart renewed by the grace of God; in which are implanted every gracious principle, flowing from a vital union to Jeſus; from whom they derive daily ſupplies of grace; which enables them to endeavour gradually to mortify, and abſtain from every ſin, and to comply with every duty, incumbent upon them in every department of life. Nor are they, as a ſhip in the Ocean, without helm, rudder, or ſtar to direct their courſe. The *rule* of their principles and practice is, not the vain opinions of men; but the word of God, eſpecially the law, which Chriſt by his holy ſpirit hath written in their hearts. The *Chief End* of all

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is, not the applauſe of men, nor to merit the pardon of ſin, and a title to Heaven; but to glorify God. Now, Saul, whatever hath a tendency to promote this kind of real and powerful holineſs is worthy of our conſideration; and to this, I am certain, a firm belief of the doctrine of original ſin doth lead.

Saul. I have often heard, that it is common for men to run from one extreme to the other. I now ſee it verified. When you deſcribed a natural man you ſeemed to have in your eye a fallen Angel. When you deſcribe a ſpiritual man you ſeem to me to give the character of a glorified ſaint. The common proverb is now falſified; "That virtue lies in the mid-"dle, vice in the extremes." I have known ſome men, who denied original ſin, and yet, had ſome excellent virtues: They were juſt and honeſt in their dealings, loving and faithful huſband's, kind and indulgent parents, and hated all kinds of oppreſſion. May not a man have ſome diſtinguiſhed virtues, and yet be ignorant of the conſtituent parts of holineſs, which you have mentioned.

Paul. I know, my dear Saul, that men frequently think, that we may have ſome virtues, and yet be totally deſtitute of others. I readily grant that men may have moral virtues, who are deſtitute of religion; and that men may have the *Profeſſion* of religion, who have not the *Power* of it. And God forbid, that I ſhould depreciate any man's merit. Theſe moral virtues are uſeful to ſociety; and no man hath a right to judge of the motives, which influence the actions of others: But however amiable moral virtues may appear to men, they certainly are greatly deficient, and even culpable in the ſight of God, if they do not proceed from right motives, or are done to promote God's glory. But even ſhould one or two ſhining virtues, which are abſolutely neceſſary in conſtituting a holy life, appear in any man; will you, therefore, aſſert that he is a holy man? Becauſe words are the eſſential parts of a ſentence, will you, therefore, aſſert, that a word is a ſentence, that a ſentence is an oration, or an oration every kind of poſſible compoſition? Unity is eſſential, in character, as well as in poetry, or paint-

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ing. When a man is converted by the word and ſpirit of God, ſin gets a blow at the root; and all the branches of it begin gradually to wither. When the Sun riſes, he enlightens the whole hemiſphere, diſcovers every object, and gradually encreaſes his light and heat 'till noon: In like manner, when the light of grace ſhines firſt into the ſinner's heart, it diffuſes its enlightning and vivifying influence thro' every faculty of the ſoul and member of the body, raiſing in the ſoul a hatred of every ſin, and a love of holineſs. 'Tho at firſt the diſcovery, which grace makes, may be but faint, like the morning light; yet in ſaints it gradually increaſeth, 'till they come to the ſtature of men in Chriſt Jeſus. "The path of the juſt is as the ſhi-"ning light, that ſhineth more and more unto the per-"fect day." *Proverbs*, iv. 18. The firſt implantation of grace is called regeneration, or a ſecond birth; The ſpirit of God, certainly, knows how to ſelect the moſt proper ſimilies and metaphors. As a child hath all the eſſential parts of a man, which gradually come to perfection; ſo every ſaint hath all the eſſential parts of holineſs. Or in other words, he hath a principle of grace, which operates in mortifying and avoiding ſins againſt the firſt and ſecond table of God's law; and in promoting every duty. If men have only morality; but reject religion, however amiable it may appear, there are at the root ſome worm of popular applauſe, intereſt, or other ſelfiſh motives that will make it wither, as Jonah's gourd did when it was ſmitten by the Sun. Many ſpeak of virtue, as if God had no connection with it; but let a man be ever ſo juſt in his dealings, can he be a virtuous man, I mean a finiſhed character; when he gives the God of truth a lie, and diſbelieves the doctrines of Divine Revelation? To aſſert that he is a holy, or even a worthy man, when he neglects prayer, ſwears, and lives as if his whole felicity depended upon carnal gratifications, my dear Saul, is contrary to the propriety and Unity of conduct, which are eſſential to conſtitute true worth and holineſs; we muſt not take a part for the whole, ſolid ſenſe refutes the idea.

Saul. Do you mean that a gracious perſon will never

never fall into any ſcandalous ſin? Experience refutes the wild dreams of perfectioniſts.

Paul. I do not: To maintain, that, in our preſent imperfect ſtate, we can live without ſin, is contrary to ſcripture; "There is none righteous *in this reſpect*, "no not one." *Rom.* iii. 10. To be holy, perfectly holy, in this life, was peculiar only to the bleſſed Jeſus. There is the remainder of ſin in the beſt, under which they daily groan, as Paul did, *Rom.* vii. 24. By ſurprize, temptation, or internal corruption, they may fall, as David and Peter: But they will not *perſevere*, *juſtify*, or *reſolve to continue* in any courſe, that they believe to be ſinful. They endeavour to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and Godly in this preſent world. The grace of God teacheth them this practical leſſon. *Tit.* ii 14.

Saul. But you have not yet anſwered my queſtion: How doth the belief of the doctrine of original ſin promote holineſs? You very ingeniouſly turn the converſation to other topicks.

Paul. I have not forgotten, what I propoſed. But it was neceſſary, once for all, to inform you of my idea of holineſs; which you muſt retain in your mind, in all our future converſations. Whatever, therefore, we uſe as motives, arguments, means, &c. to promote piety, or morality, may be ſaid to have a tendency to incite to holineſs; and there are the *credenda*, and the *agenda* in religion, or faith and practice: As no man can guide a Ship at Sea, who hath not learned navigation; ſo no man can be a practical chriſtian, who is ignorant of the leading principles of chriſtianity: Certainly our fall in the firſt Adam, and our recovery by the ſecond Adam, Chriſt Jeſus, are the two great points, to which all the truths of chriſtianity, more immediately, or more remotely tend. A belief, then, an operative, heart affecting belief of our fallen eſtate, muſt have a tendency to promote holineſs, in the following inſtances.

1*ſt*. A ſenſe of our own depravity will check the riſing of pride, and excite humility. Shall we be proud of our family? We did not chooſe our parents; and the more worthy they were, the more culpable

are

are we, if we act improperly. Are we proud of our talents? They are God's gifts, and we may provoke him to blast them; or by hiding them in a napkin, and not emproving them, they may be taken from us. Are we proud of our works? They have many blemishes, and our sins are more numerous. How many duties have we omitted! How many sins have we committed! How many mercies have we slighted! How many calls of Christ's word, spirit and providence have we disregarded! How have our hearts risen with pride and resentment, against the reproofs of friends, the invectives of enemies, or the adverse dispensations of providence! And from what, my dear Saul, hath this proud and ingrateful conduct proceeded? Most assuredly from our wicked hearts. Should not then, a consideration of this excite humility, make us of a forgiving disposition, and prevent harsh censuring of others, when we are ignorant of the temptations to which they were exposed.

2*dly*. A sight of the corruption of our nature, of our spiritual disorders, will make us prize Jesus Christ, the spiritual physician; and follow his prescriptions. There is no other Saviour; by his death a fountain hath been opened to wash us from the guilt of sin, by his blood; and from the filth of sin, by his spirit. He is exalted as a Prince, and as a Saviour to give gifts and repentance to such as did rebel. The blessed Jesus came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Let us then follow the prescriptions of this heavenly physician. This will recommend all the externals of holiness, and excite us to prayer, reading the scriptures, attending upon the public ordinances; and also to look to God for a blessing upon them; without the blessing of God, and the working of his spirit in our hearts, the means of grace will be ineffectual.

3*dly* A view of our wicked hearts will convince us of the necessity of watchfulness. A watchful christian is a holy christian. "Watch and pray says Christ, "that you enter not into temptation." How great "the necessity of watching against Satan's manifold devices, and the world's alluring snares; when we have

matter

matter within our hearts, upon which their temptations faſten! What evident need there is to watch againſt, and to reſiſt the riſing of corruption; for if it break forth, it acquires ſtrength in its motion! *That* man is ignorant of vital holineſs, who is not thoroughly convinced of the Neceſſity of daily watching over his heart - paſſions—ſenſes—thoughts--Words and actions, yea of obſerving alſo the opportunities, which God gives him to be ſerviceable to others.

4*thly*. A thorough conviction of our ſin and miſery will teach us not to truſt either in ourſelves or others: If men are ſerviceable to us, we ought with gratitude to confeſs it; polite breeding, yea religion enjoins it: But at the ſame time we are to conſider, that God hath the hearts of all men in his hand. Men can be nothing to us, but what God makes them to be. And, as men are changeable, ſo they have not always will or ability to help us. *Pſalm*. cxxx. 3. "Put not "your truſt in Princes, nor in the ſon of man, in "whom there is no help, his breath goeth forth, he "returneth to his earth:" "In that very day his "thoughts periſh." There is no ſtronger proof, at leaſt a more evident one, of the corruption of human nature, than the inſtability of men, and the implacable reſentment that one friend may on a future day, have to another; "Curſed is the man that truſteth in man." *Jer*. xvii. 5. And equally vain muſt it be to truſt in our own heart, God calls him a "Fool" that does ſo.

5*thly*. Finally, if we are not to truſt in ourſelves, or others, becauſe we are corrupt ſinners, in heart and life; will not this teach us the neceſſity of chuſing Chriſt and living a life of faith in him, who is a friend that ſticketh cloſer than a brother. A friend, who is permanent in his love. A friend, who attends his people thro' life and death, and will take them to Heaven, where they will eternally enjoy him? This, my dear Saul, is the improvement, which you, I, and every perſon, ought to make of the doctrine of original ſin, and not to make it an excuſe for wickedneſs, as many do, crying out, "Lord help us, we are all ſinners, we have wicked hearts that lead us aſtray;" without being deeply concerned for this wickedneſs,

or

ſincerely deſiring to be delivered from it.

Saul. Well, really there is ſome truth in what you ſay. I am certain that you cannot ſay as much about the doctrine of the attonement. It is time to adjourn, let us diſcourſe of that at our next meeting.

Paul. I am ſatisfied. The ſociety was then diſmiſſed.

THE END OF THE SECOND DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE III.

JOHN, James and Thomas, having come early, had time for the following converſation, before the ſociety met.

Thomas. The Profeſſor, in this morning's lecture, ſaid, " That a *natural inability* neither entitled a " man to praiſe; nor expoſed him to cenſure: But " that it was quite the reverſe in moral inability." Upon theſe terms, be pleaſed, John, to give me your explanation.

John. By *natural inability*; I preſume, that the Profeſſor means, " Any impediment extraneous to " the will; which hinders us from doing an action: " whether it ariſes from a natural defect, in the un- " derſtanding; or in the conſtitution of the body; or " from external objects." A man lame and blind, cannot read the Bible, or go to Church. He is not culpable, therefore, in neglecting theſe duties; be-

cauſe

cause his natural inabilities disqualify him for their performance. He cannot rob nor steal; and, herein, for the same reason, he is not intitled to praise. A pious man, in health and strength, cast into a dungeon, by a violent persecutor, let his inclinations be ever so strong to do his duty, cannot; but, because of his confinement, he is not culpable,

Thomas. I understand you: *A natural inability* arises from things, in which the will is no ways concerned; and which an act of the will cannot remove. Please to explain a moral inability.

John. " A *moral inability* consists either in the " want of inclination; or the strength of a contrary in- " clination; or the want of sufficient motives in " view, to induce and excite the act of the will; or " the strength of apparent motives to the contrary." Or both these may be resolved into one; and it may be said in one word, " That *moral inability* consists " in the opposition or want of inclination."

Thomas. If you would give me some instances, I would better comprehend your meaning. Similies and examples properly applied set things in a clear light.

John. The temptation, which Joseph's lewd mistress proposed to him, was strong; she could enrich him and load him with honours; and it might be secret, " There was none of the men of the House " within:" But a sanctified will, the law of God in his heart, gratitude to his indulgent master, and love to his God, were stronger than the aluring temptation; he, therefore, had a moral inability to sin in such a gross manner; and consequently rejects it with disdain, saying. " How can I do this great wickedness and " sin against God." A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking strong drink. A child of great love and duty to his parents, may be unable to will his Father's death: Yea, some men may be so under the power of a vile disposition, that they may be unable to love those, who are most worthy of esteem and affection. A strong habit of virtue and a great degree of holiness, may cause a moral inability to love wickedness in general; may render a man unable to take complacence, in wicked persons,

persons, or things; or to chuse a wicked life, and prefer it to a virtuous one. And, on the other hand; a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an inability to love and choose holiness; and render him utterly unable to love an infinitly holy being; or to choose and cleave to him as his chief good. You now may see, that this moral inability, not like a natural inability, exposes a man to censure, or entitles him to praise. I may here observe, that frequently Divines confound these terms, when they say man hath a natural inability to keep God's law, they mean a moral inability, which they call natural; because we have it by nature, not as God formed it: but as it is now corrupted by Adam's fall. "God "made man upright; but he hath sought out many "inventions." *See Edward's, careful and strict enquiry into the modern prevailing notions of free will* &c. Page 24.

Thomas. What did the Professor mean by *Necessity*, in a lecture which he delivered yesterday? It is not easy to have a clear idea of a great number of abstract terms.

John. By *Necessity*, as the Professor used it, in his discourse upon *Liberty*, and *Necessity*, I understand, "What must exist or come to pass according to some "plan." *Necessary*, (and *Necessity* also the abstract,) *is* a relative term; and must have relation to some other thing, as *Part*, *Cause*, *Effect*, *Antecedent* or *Consequent*.

Thomas. Alas! my dear friend: You have introduced, *Cause*, *Effect Antecedent* and *Consequent*; which you seem to think necessary, in order to explain the word *Necessity*. I dare say these words also require an explanation.

John. I will, Thomas, most readily explain them; as it will not be a deviation from the answer to your question, about *Necessity*. A *Cause* is that which naturally produceth its *Effect*. As the Sun naturally produceth light and heat. The *Sun* is called the *Cause*; *Light* and *Heat* the *Effects*. An *Antecedent* is that, which in time goes before its *Consequent*; and, in some sort, is connected with it; Yet the *Consequent*

 is

is not the natural *Effect* of its *Antecedent*. As *Eternal life*, in Heaven, is the *Consequent* of a *holy life* on Earth. Now let us transpose these two examples. Suppose I say, that *Light* and *Heat* are the *Consequents* of the *Sun*'. I do not speak with propriety, they are more than the *Consequents*; for light and heat are the natural *Effects* of the Sun. And, in the second example, should I say, *Eternal life* is the *Effect of holiness*; I assert a falsehood. For holiness is not the *Cause* of eternal life, but the *Blood of Jesus Christ*; which cleanseth from all sin. Once more, if we say that *eternal life* is the consequent of *Christ's obedience and death*, as its *Antecedent*. Our assertion is not sufficiently explicit. For Christs *Obedience and death* is the proper and natural *Cause*, why eternal life is conferred upon his people. Let us now return to the explanation of the term *Necessity*. " Whatever, therefore, " is connected with any other thing, as a *constituent* " *part*, or as its *Cause*, or *Antecedent*, there is a *Neces-* " *sity* for that thing, it *must* excite as a *part*, or come to pass as an *Effect*, or *Consequent*." Pope having taken a survey of God's works, considers the different parts as so many links of one great chain; and asserts, that there is a *Necessity* for every part.

" Were one step broken, the great scale's destroyed,
" From nature's chain whatever link you strike,
" Tenth or ten thousand breaks the chain alike.
" And if each system in gradation roll,
" Alike essential to the amazing whole;
" The least confusion; but in one not all,
" That system only, but the whole must fall."

Pope's essay on Man. *Epistle*. I. *Lines*. 240. &c.

And in the *Moral World*; we must suppose, that God acts with *Order* and *Regularity*. There is a *Necessity* for every thing that happens; for his Providence brings to pass, whatever he has determined.

Thomas. That opinion of yours, favours Heathenish fatalism.

John. By no means; The Heathens imagined that there

there was a fate; to which their God's themselves were subjected. Tho' all happen of necessity, in reference to his divine purpose; yet God wills and acts freely. "Known unto God are all his works "from the beginning." *Acts*, xv 18.

Thomas. Then he must approve of sin, for it happens.

John. He wills to permit, to restrain, and to overrule sin; and makes it the occasion of illustrating the glory of all his perfections: But he doth not will the means and the end, with the same kind of volition. In the plan of redemption, the end God proposed was, to glorify his perfections, and to magnify his law, in saving his people from sin and misery. The end he heartily wills, because it is laudable. But in the crucifying of Christ, sinful men and sinful actions, must be employed. These he willed to permit; but he neither commanded, nor approved of their sin. A man, who hath a mortified leg, to save his life permits his leg to be cut off. Now, the end he has in view is the preservation of his life; this he wills heartily; but a mean to attain this end, is to permit the infected member to be cut off: but no one will assert that he as heartily wills the mean, *the cutting of the leg*; as he doth the end, *the preservation of his life.*

Thomas. Then, nothing comes to pass by chance, or accident.

John. Many things appear to men to come by chance, or accident. Because they are ignorant of the causes which produce them; or the ends that the Almighty intends to accomplish, by such fortuitous events. Tho' it might appear chance what part of Canaan, each of the twelve tribes should inhabit; as every one got his division by lot; yet every tribe got their division, as Moses had foretold. Which will appear, by comparing *Deut.* xxxiii. with the book of Joshua, Moses said of Zebulon and Issachar. "They shall suck "of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in "the sand. After Moses is dead, lots are cast; and Zabulon's border "went up toward the sea." *Joshua*, xix. 11. &c. &c. &c. "The lot is cast into the lap; "but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Comfortable doctrine, indeed; to believe that every thing

thing we meet with, in life, is ordered by unerring Providence! *Prov.* xvi. 3.

Thomas. If all things come to pafs, according to God's determination; man's liberty is deftroyed; he can have no will, no choice.

John. Quite the contrary: For the Divine decree is not known to men; and lays no reftraint upon them. But men act freely, in fulfilling the decrees. Jofeph's brethren had determined to murder him; but God had decreed, that they fhould not: To accomplifh his decree his Providence fo ordered it, as at that very moment, the Midianites merchantmen pafs by; the thought then occured, that it was better to fell him; and they fold him to the merchants, who carried him into Egypt. His brethren by this promote, what they intended to defeat, his advancement. In the crucifixion of Jefus, every wicked agent acted freely; Judas betrayed him out of a principle of covetoufnefs; the Pharifees out of envy accufe him; and Pilate, for fear of offending the people, paffed fentence upon him. In all this, however, they only did, what the hand and counfel of the Lord had determined to be done. *Acts*, iv. 29. And, ii. 23. And tho' they hated Chriit worfe than the two thieves; yet they could not break his legs, as they did theirs: Becaufe it was prophetically typifyed of him in the paffchal lamb, "That not "a bone of him fhould be broken." *Exodus*, xii. 46. "Neither fhall ye break a bone thereof."

Thomas. Jofeph's life and Chrift's death are extrordinary cafes. I will not deny, that God had decreed every thing refpecting them: But are we to fuppofe this, in every perfon's cafe?

John. Your objection muft fuppofe, either that God doth not know every man, and his actions; or, that it would be too much trouble for the Diviue being to fuperintend, govern, reftrain, and overrule them: The former fuppofition reflects upon his wifdom; the latter upon his power. You muft acknowledge that God made all things; and will you deny that his Providence extends to all things? Without his preferva-tion, they could not exift one moment: Without his goverment, they would run into confufion. Could

there

there be ſuch regularity in the World, ſuch reſtraints upon wicked men and Devils that they cannot confound, or deſtroy all order; if the Providence of God did not extend to the moſt minute objects? And if he govern all ſo regularly, it muſt be from ſome wiſe counſel, and this counſel is the counſel of his own will; or, in other words, his divine decree, which extends to all things. " Who worketh all things after the " councel of his own will." *Eph.* i. ii.

" Oh blindneſs to the future kindly given,
" That each may fill the circle marked by Heaven,
" Who ſees with equal eye, as God of all,
" A hero periſh, or a ſparrow fall."

Pope's eſſay on Man.

James. Your diſcourſe, gentlemen, reminds me of a converſation, that happened in my father's houſe, between him and the miniſter of our pariſh. If you permit me, I will briefly recite the heads of it, as it is not foreign from your ſubject.

John. I have no objection, have you, Thomas?

Thomas. Not I: 'tis not reaſonable that James ſhould be excluded from a part of the converſation.

James. You know that I have been at the College, only a few months. I ſhould be ſwift to hear, and ſlow to ſpeak, that I may acquire knowledge, and not expoſe my ignorance.

Thomas. Proceed without further apology, leſt Saul and Paul come, before you finiſh your narrative.

James, I muſt inform you, that after the death of our late miniſter, Mr. Profundus, Mr. Bombaſticus was ordained in our pariſh. He is a young man, of a very lively, and verboſe diſpoſition; always introducing ſome learned topic, in promiſcouus companies. On a certain evening, he ran through the circle of ſciences, at my father's, where a large company of ladies, and gentlemen had been invited to ſpend the evening; altho there was not a profeſſed ſcholar among them. My father, like other old people, thought he had a right to ſpeak in his turn; and that Mr. Bombaſticus ſhould not

not engrofs the whole converfation. "Well fir," fays my father a little teftily, "The wonderful things, "which you have mentioned, for aught I know, may "be very ufeful to fcholars: But for Merchants, Me-"chanics, Farmers, and other plain folk, I do not "apprehend the utility of fuch abftrufe knowledge. "What is it to me whether a cannon ball flie in a "ftreight, or crooked line; If I myfelf can avoid every "crooked path, and direct my fteps according to "God's ftreight commandments It is no matter "whether every fquare inch of my body carry four-"teen pounds, or fourteen thoufand pounds of air, "when its weight doth not oppref me: I fhould be "much more concerned about the burden of my fins, "which, if God do not pardon, would fink me to the "infernal pit. It gives me no trouble whether the "Sun is larger, or lefs than the earth; or how far diftant "he may be, when I fee and feel his vivifying light "and heat. To difcover the fon of righteoufnefs, a-"rifing with healing in his wings, is infinitely more "ufeful knowledge. I care not, whether there be "inhabitants in Jupiter, or Saturn. My virtue or vice "can neither profit, nor injure them. I wifh that I "may be enabled by Divine grace to perform the du-"ties, which I owe to the inhabitants of *this* World. "You harangued man, about *Liberty* and *Neceffity*: "you are endeavouring to fafhion Divinity in a hea-"thenifh mould. It is only the doctrine of the de-"crees, and the execution of them you are obfcuring "by your fcholaftic terms. Read the Bible: read the "confeffion of faith, founded upon the Bible; there "thefe doctrines are explained." My father, then, leaped up, brought down the confeffion of faith, and read the two firft fections of the third chapter, "Of "God's eternal decrees," and gave his own comments upon them. "God from all eternity did, by the "moft wife and holy counfel of his own will, freely "and unchangeably ordain whatfoever comes to pafs: "yet fo, as thereby neither is God the author of fin, "nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, "nor is the liberty or contingency of fecond caufes "taken away, but rather eftablifhed." My father adds.

adds. " There's *Necessity* for you, AN UNCHANGE-
" ABLE DECREE. There's liberty, NO VIOLENCE
" OFFERED TO THE WILL OF THE CREATURES.
" A small pin falling out of a watch, or turning
" wrong may stop its motion. The least unforeseen
" incident may blow up the best laid schemes of men:
" But can any incident fall in, which can thwart God's
" purposes; or stop his Providence, when he is pos-
" sesed of infinite Wisdom, and irresistable power. I
" never heard of any who deny that God knows all
" things, that will come to pass. But some represent
" the Almighty, as if he sat upon a tower to see the
" event; they exclude his Providence. Do not ima-
" gine, Mr. Bombasticus, that the Lord only foresees
" what will come to pass, upon any supposed contin-
" gency, and makes his decree conditional that it may
" answer the event, and so make the event the cause
" of the decree; no such thing; the decree is from
" eternity, and the event will fulfil the decree; this is
" plain from the second section" " Although God
" knows whatsoever may, or can, come to pass upon
" all supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed
" any thing because *he foresaw it, as future*, or as
" that which would come to pass upon such conditi-
" ons," " There's Divinity, scriptural Divinity for
" you! If ever the Almighty in a remarkable manner,
" presided in any assembly to direct them since the A-
" postles days, it was, I think, in the Westminister as-
" sembly, when they composed the confession of
" faith, and larger and shorter catechisms; and let me
" remind you, Mr. Bombasticus, you have, at your li-
" cence, and at your ordination, subscribed a formula,
" wherein you declared," " That these doctrines
" were agreeable to and founded upon the word of
" God, and the same with the confession of your
" faith." My father, having exhausted his remarks,
rose up and laid by the book. My mother blushed as
red as scarlet. The rest of the company, who were
weary of Mr. Bombasticus's Philosophical harangues,
secretly rejoiced. As my father is a ruling elder, in
our congregation, and has a considerable influence,
lest he should suspect Mr. Bombasticus of error, and
might

might raise a ferment in the parish. He determined to make as decent a retreat, as possible. " Mr Simplex " says he, for that is my father's name," you and " I are perfectly agreed; I meant by necessity the Divine decree; and that the Divine decree did not " destroy or offer any violence to the will of the " creature: Because the agent was influenced to act " as he did, by some one prepollent motive, or a " number of motives, appearing in such a view, as determined him to will and act, as he did, when he " was thereby accomplishing the Divine decree." A solemn silence for a few minitues ensued. My mother, then, ordered supper to be brought in, and after supper and prayers, the company parted.

Thomas. Was your father sorry, when his heat subsided that he so rudely attacked Mr. Bombasticus?

James. I overheard a private conversation, that my father and mother had, that same night. My mother said, " Why did you speak so bluntly to Mr. " Bombasticus? you see, my dear, he is a very agreeable young man; and, I suppose very learned, Mr. " Profundus never entertained us with such deep subjects: Nor were his sermons so elegant, or so full " of learning, as Mr. Bombasticus's are." To which my father replied, " I was upon recollecting, that it " happened, in my own house, and before my children, " a little vexed. Most people, especially young ones, " are too prone to despise ministers. And if they despise them, they will give very little attention to " their instructions. You are, my dear, very right in " observing that Mr. Profundus did not entertain us, " with such subjects. His discourse was always pleasant, mostly edifying, and frequently adapted to the " capacity of the company. What necessity has a " learned man to go into the depths of Philosophy before the ignorant; especially, when no one present " introduceth such a subject. A little anecdote, or " piece of Church history, or a judicious observation, " naturally arising from the subjects, and occurrences, " which are introduced, are far better. In this manner, the Apostle became all things to all men, that " he might win some, will any wise man take a sledge

" to

" to drive a threepenny nail, when a hammer will do
" it better? It is very true, there were not so many
" hard words in Mr. Profundus's, as there are in Mr.
" Bombasticus's sermon's: But I assure you, there was
" more solid sense. Mr. Profundus did not study to
" astonish his hearers, with what they could not un-
" derstand. Nor, indeed, did he study amusement,
" but only as it was connected with improvement.
" The chief end of all his sermons was to make men
" wiser and better. His sermons were plain, not like
" the dark responses of the heathen Oracles, which
" might be taken in a wrong, sooner than in a right
" sense. His similies were plain, yet not taken from
" ridiculous things in nature, which might turn the
" house of God into a Theatre. I believe, however,
" that he was a very profound scholar. I went once
" as elder with him to the presbytery. There were
" some candidates for the ministry, whom the minis-
" ters examined in the learned languages, in Philoso-
" phy, in History, and in Divinity. And not any
" minister, in my opinion went so deep into every
" subject, as Mr. Profundus did. And in any dispu-
" ted point he was like Job, when he spoke, the rest
" answered not again." When we were riding home
from the Presbytery, I said to him, " Sir, I did not
" think, that you were so good a scholar. I really,
" imagined, that you were indifferent about Philoso-
" phy, Greek, or Latin, you never introduce scraps
" of Greek and Latin, into your sermons, as some
" young men do." " Mr. Simplex, replied he I make
" use of my learning to enable me to speak intelli-
" gently, and with perspicuity upon every subject, in
" the Pulpit. I love a scholar, and I love learning;
" and at proper seasons, revive what I learned, at the
" School and College: and, endeavour not only to re-
" tain, but to encrease my knowledge. That man
" indeed, must have prodigious talents, who, with-
" out learning, can make a tolerable figure, either in
" Church or state. Read the Histories of the greatest
" men, whom this, or any other kingdom, ever pro-
" duced, and you will generally find, they were great
" scholars. I love to discourse upon literary subjects.

" but only with ſcholars, not in a dictatorial manner, " but to give and receive uſeful hints. I have my " learning, continued Profundus, as I have my mo- " ney, for uſe, not for oſtentation. He would be " reputed a fool, who would pull out his purſe in " every company when he had no occaſion. It " would be an inſult to every man poorer than him- " ſelf, as if he ſaid, I am richer than you. But a " wiſe man will pull out his purſe to pay his bill, " his debts, to relieve the diſtreſſed, or purchaſe " the conveniences of life. A coxcomical pedant, " will boaſt of, and diſcover his learning before the " ignorant, and endeavour to make them believe, that " he is more learned than others: A ſolid ſcholar, " will not be proclaiming his learning in every com- " pany, but only when there is an opportunity, a- " mong ſcholars. And he is willing to take a uſeful " hint from any man, whether learned or unlearned: " He eſteems knowledge for its own ſake, let him " find it where he will. A jewel, is a jewel in the " mire, as well as in the King's Crown." But I perceive, that Saul and Paul have come in, we muſt keep ſilence, as Paul is beginning to ſpeak.

Paul. You ſeemed to alledge, laſt night, Saul, that there was ſome foundation for the doctrine of original ſin: but that the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs was not ſo eaſily eſtabliſhed.

Saul. I did; for nothing appears (to me at leaſt) more abſurd, than to aſſert that I ſhould be juſtified by another perſon's righteouſneſs: The very repeating of ſuch an aſſertion, is ſufficient to refute it: Let us, however, propoſe ſome regular plan, to prevent confuſion, or Anticipation.

Paul. I heartily agree: And if you pleaſe, let this be the order in which we will diſcourſe: (1) Speak of the perſon of our Mediator. (2) Speak of the Father's appointing him to be our mediator, and of Chriſt's voluntary ſubſtitution of himſelf in our law room. (3) And then, what is to be underſtood by Chriſt's righteouſneſs, which is the alone foundation of our juſtification?

Saul. I am ſatisfied; who is our mediator? There ave been, in antient and modern times, many dis utes about the perſon of Chriſt.

Paul.

Paul. Our mediator, or redeemer, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal son of God, the second person of the adorable trinity, the same in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father, and holy Ghost, became man, and so was and continueth to be, God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one divine person for ever.

Saul. It would appear that the terms, Father, Son, and holy Ghost, are only different names given to one divine being. Reason cannot comprehend HOW three divine persons, should subsist in one divine essence.

Paul. You are right in suggesting, that we cannot comprehend HOW three divine persons should subsist in one numerical essence. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery; the origin of all mysteries. The very term imports, that we cannot comprehend it; for, if we could, it would be no mystery. If by our finite reason we could comprehend God, he would not be God; for this plain reason, that a finite being cannot comprehend an infinite being. The very idea which we form of God, is, that he is an incomprehensible, unchangeable, self existent being, superior to, and before all beings. Should we attempt to prove the largeness of the Ocean, by endeavouring to pour it into a cockle shell? Or shall we prove that the expansion of the Heavens is large, by measuring it with our finger? The doctrine of the Trinity is above reason: But not contrary to it: for rectified reason, (I had almost said, even plain common sense) will teach us that we cannot comprehend an infinite being: But tho' we cannot have a *comprehensive*, yet we may have an *apprehensive* knowledge of the Trinity. We may believe that there are three persons in the Godhead; for it is highly reasonable, that we should believe whatever a God of infinite knowledge and unerring truth reveals. Tho' we cannot comprehend HOW it is, yet we may believe THAT it is. Is any truth more plainly asserted than the doctrine of the Trinity? "For "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the holy Ghost, and these three "are one." Observe the difference between this and the following verse, "The spirit, and the water, and

" the blood agree *in one*;" that is in one testimony: But in this verse, the three persons *are one*, not only agree in one testimony: but *are one*: one in essence, equal in power and glory. 1 *John*, v. 7. 8.

Saul. Stop: You must recollect that it is a disputed point, whether that verse is really in John's original epistle, or thurst in, by some after transcribers, to favour their notion of a Trinity.

Paul. I know that some have denied it: but the context would be imperfect, without this verse; for it recites the three witnesses in heaven, and the next, the three witnesses on earth. The term WORD, which John often gives to the second person, is a presumptive argument, that this verse is authentic. For he says. " The WORD was made flesh." Some careless ancient transcriber, (as printing is a late invention,) might have passed this verse, as the next is similar, in its beginning; and others transcribing from this deficient manuscript, many old ones might have wanted this verse: For tho' the first writers of the Bible were inspired, all transcribers were not inspired: We will not, therefore, give up this verse, because some deny its authenticity; no more than we will the Bible, because deists reject it. But glory to God, we have many other proofs of a Trinity. The commision given by Christ to all his apostles, which extends also to all their successors in the ministerial office, " Go " ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them " in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of " the holy Ghost," is an evident proof of a Trinity of persons, in a unity of essence. It is not in the *Names* of the Father, &c. No: There are three persons, but only one *Name*, substance, or nature. God's name signifies himself. Nor is it said, in the name of the Father, Son, and holy Ghost; For had this commission wanted the copulative *and* between the Father and the Son, adversaries might have objected, as the Sabellians did, that they were only different names of the father: But if ever the figure *Pollysyndeton* shone with peculiar lustre, it is here; " In the name of the Father, " *and of* the Son, *and of* the holy Ghost:" That to deny that there are three persons, spoken of here is a violence

violence to ſenſe and grammar; yet they are but one name, or are the ſame in ſubſtance, equal in power and glory. *Mat.* xxviii. 19.

Saul. However true this doctrine may be, I do not ſee the uſefulneſs of it to practice. The old teſtament ſaints knew nothing of this, which you ſeem to make, eſſential doctrine.

Paul. I beg your pardon: The Bible begins with the doctrine of the Trinity. "In the beginning God "created the Heavens and the Earth;"—"And the "ſpirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." I read ſome where, "That Moſes diſtinctly ſpeaks "of *Elohim creantis, ſpiritus Elohim aquis incubantis,* "*& verbi omnia producentis,*" God creating, the ſpirit brooding upon the waters, and the Word of God producing all things. That ELOHIM is God, the adverſaries will not deny. The Spirit of God is a perſon diſtinct from the Father; to whom Job aſcribes his creation. "The Spirit of God hath made me and "the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." If by the breath of the Lord's mouth Job means, what he calls the Spirit of God; and it is probable he did. I can quote a verſe, where creation is ſaid to be the work of the Trinity; "By the WORD of the LORD "were the Heavens made, and all the hoſt of them "by the BREATH of his mouth." By the WORD we are not here to underſtand the ſimple command, but the incarnate Word of God, as appears from John's declcration, "The WORD was God;—All things "were made by him, and without him was not any "thing made, that was made." By the BREATH of the Lord may be underſtood the Spirit; which in the Greek is expreſſed by the ſame word that ſignifies wind. As Moſes begins with the doctrine of the Trinity, he frequently reminds us of it: viz. at the creation of man: At the confuſion, of languages; and at the deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. "And God ſaid, let *us* make man in *our* own image." Let *us*, the plural number, make man, it is not ſaid in our own images; But after our own image: Not a diverſity; but an identity: Becauſe the three perſons are the ſame in ſubſtance. Again. "Go to, let *us* go

" down and there confound their language." There can be no reason assigned, why the Lord, who so often speaks of himself in the singular, should use the plural number; unless it were to point out a plurality of persons in the divine essence. " And the Lord said, " Behold the man is become as one of *us*." " Again;" Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the LORD in Heaven. The Lord, the Son, from the Lord, the Father; For the Father hath committed all judgement to the Son. Was this doctrine forgotten when Moses died? No: They had his writings, and the Spirit spoke in the same manner, by David, Isaiah, Zechariah &c. &c. You alledge that this doctrine is merely speculative; that it hath not a tendency to lead to practice: Pray that this thought of your heart may be forgiven you. Can we serve God acceptably, if we are ignorant of him? If we do not believe that there are three persons in the Godhead, we can have no idea of the covenant of grace: nor understand many texts in the Bible, Ex: Gr: " Behold my servant, whom I uphold, " mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put " my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgement " to the Gentiles." Here is a Trinity; The *Father* speaks of the *Son* as his elect servant, in the plan of redemption; and of the *Spirit*, as resting upon him and qualifying him for his work. *Gen.* i 1. 2. 3. *Job.* xxxiii. 4. *Psalms.* xxxiii. 6. *Gen.* i. 26 27. 28. and iii. 22. and xi. 7. and xix. 24. *Ps.* cx. 1. 2. *Isaiah* xlii. 1. *Zec.* xiii: 7.

Saul. After all you have said, there may be good persons who live religiously, and yet do not know the doctrine of the Trinity: Paul asked some disciples. " Have you received the holy Ghost since you belie- " ved." Mark their answer. " We have not so " much as heard whether there be any holy Ghost." *Acts.* xix, 2.

Paul. But did they die in that ignorance? Or did they reject the knowledge of a holy Ghost, when it was revealed? There is a vast difference between not knowing the doctrine of the Trinity, and opposing it when revealed: The former proceeds from ignorance,

and

and may be removed; the latter proceeds from a heart full of blaſphemy, and from a mouth opened againſt the Heavens. Hath not God promiſed to lead his people into all truth; and ſhall we ſuppoſe, that he will not give them any true knowledge of himſelf? That we cannot draw nigh to God, in an acceptable manner, without knowing ſomething of a Trinity, I prove from *Eph.* ii. 18 "For through him (viz. "*Chriſt*,) we have both acceſs by one *Spirit* unto the "*Father*." *Obſerve*, if we worſhip God acceptably, it muſt be by the *one Spirit* through *Jeſus Chriſt*. All the reformed Churches adopt this as an eſſential doctrine. It is contained in the ſecond chapter of the Weſtminiſter confeſſion of faith; and the profeſſion of the belief of it, is a term of miniſterial and chriſtian communion among all SOUND Preſbyterians. The church of England hath adopted it, by receiving the Nicene and Athanaſian Creeds; which they read at certain days in the time of divine ſervice. Hear the ſentiments of the great Cranmar, Riddly, Latimar; or whoever they were, who formed the ſervice for Trinity Sunday. "It is very right and our bounden "duty, that we ſhould at all times, and in all places, "give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Almighty everlaſt-"ing God: Who art one God, one Lord, not one "only Perſon; but three perſons in one ſubſtance: "For that which we believe of the glory of the Fa-"ther, the ſame we believe of the Son, and of the "Holy Ghoſt, without any difference or inequality."

Saul. The doctrine of the Trinity hath rent the church of Chriſt; and hath been the cauſe of much miſchief. As for example. The Latin Church maintained, That the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. The Greek Church as ſtrenuouſly aſſerted, The Spirit proceeded only from the Father: And becauſe the Latins would not blot out, *Filioque*, the Greek excommunicated the Latin Church.

Paul. You remind me of a ſentence in Epectetus, "Enchiridion, That every thing hath two handles; "one by which it can, and another by which it cannot "griped." With reſpect to the diſpute between the [illegible]n and Greek church, you have taken it by the Wrong,

Wrong, let me take it by the Right handle. The violent disputes of both churches evidently prove, that both deemed the doctrine of the Trinity an essential one: Though that doctrine was the occasion of rending these churches; yet it was not the cause.

Saul. Pray what is the difference between a Cause and an Occasion?

Paul. A good thing may be the occasion of sin; but it never can be the cause. Our Lord's incarnation was the occasion of turning the Mother-in-law against the Daughter-in-law; so he came occasionally to send a sword: But the cause of division, murder, &c. of which the gospel is the occasion, is the wickedness of men's heart. "From whence come wars and fightings "among you, *says James*, come they not hence, even of your own lusts." You leave, suppose, your bible in the Area of the College; a thief comes by, and seeing it, steals it: The bible's falling in the thief's way is the occasion of his theft; but you will not say it is the cause: No, it is his own wicked heart: So it was not the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost, that induced the Greeks to excommunicate the Latins; but the pride, ignorance and malice of their hearts. We must distinguish between the *use* and *abuse* of any thing. God giving plenty may be an occasion of intemperance. But sin in men's hearts is the cause why they abuse his goodness.

Saul. You proposed to speak about the person of Christ; and you have deviated from your subject, and introduced the doctrine of the Trinity.

Paul. I did not at first design to treat so largely upon that subject: But an objection you brought, made it necessary. Yet I assure you, if our conversation may be called *digressive*, it may as truly be called *progressive*: For if it be asked who is our Mediator? The proper answer is, That Jesus our Mediator is the second person of the Trinity, who assumed our nature, and is God and Man in one person: But if there be not a Trinity, there cannot be a first, second, and third person. I just observe, That it was not the di[illegible] ture essentially considered that assumed the nat[illegible] man; for, then, Father, Son and Holy Ghost v[illegible]

be incarnate: But it was the divine nature, personally considered, as subsisting in the Son. Here we are led to admire the wisdom of God, in appointing the second person of the Trinity to be our Mediator. Infinite Wisdom did not choose that the Father, in the Godhead, should become the Son, in the Manhood. Nor that the Holy Ghost should become man, who proceeds from both, and is to apply salvation. In scripture the Father is represented as the Contriver; the Son as the Purchaser; and the Holy Ghost as the Applier of salvation: The work of salvation is therefore, the work of the Trinity; and the glory of it redounds to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. I say, then, that it is a wise and glorious plan, That the middle person in the Godhead, should be the mediator between God and man: That he who was the Son in the Godhead, should be the Son of the Virgin in the Manhood: That he who is the only begotten, and well beloved Son of God, should reconcile us to God: That he who is the essential Son of God, should make us the adopted sons of God: That he who is the Father's word, should declare unto us the Father's mind, and will: That he who is the express image of his Father, should reconcile us to the image of God. Oh! Amazing wisdom, surprising love!

Saul. In what respect, is Christ the Son of God? some imagine that it is a title of office; which is peculiar to him, only as Mediator.

Paul. Christ is not the Son of God by creation, as Angels and men; nor by adoption, as believers; nor by virtue of his office as mediator; for this would make his Sonship to depend upon the will of God; that he might, or might not have existed. God was under no necessity of nature to redeem, more than to create the world; for both flowed from his sovereign good will and pleasure. But he is the Son of God by *necessary* and *eternal* generation. That is, by such necessity, that the divine nature cannot exist without subsisting in him, in the relation of a Son to the first person: For if we once suppose, that God can change his divine essence; and be, now, what he was not from rnity; we, thereby, rob him of his natural perfec-

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tions of independency, immutability, and eternity. Christ himself plainly distinguishes between his Sonship, and mediatory office. " I am from him, (viz from " the Father,) and he hath sent me." i. e. As the Son of God he was from the Father by an eternal generation; and sent by him with respect to his office. The Son, who was without beginning, always with the Father; and from all eternity begotten of him, did from all eternity partake of the same nature of the Father, " I, *says he*, and my Father are one." An appointment to a work, in the nature of a thing, cannot constitute Sonship. " God sent forth *his Son*." &c. " God so loved the World that he gave his *only be-* " *gotten Son*." He was his Son, when he gave him; and that made him an unspeakable gift. *John*. vii. 29. and x. 30. and iii. 16. *Gal*. iv. 4.

Saul. He is called the Son of God, because of his miraculous conception and birth. This the Angel expressly declares to Mary. " The holy Ghost shall " come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall " overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing, " which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son " of God." *Luke*, i. 35.

Paul. The second person of the Trinity, in becoming man, did not cease to be the Son of God. His human nature or rather his body, born of the Virgin, is called a thing; because it had no human personality, and never existed one moment; but in union with Christ's divine person; therefore, he is, on that account, called the Son of God. If Christ be called the Son of God because of his human nature; pray, in what respect, can he be called the Son of Mary, the Son of Adam, Abraham, and of man. Isaiah says. " For " unto us a child is born, unto us a *Son is given*." Here is a plain distinction between his Human Nature, and his divine person. As man he is a child born; as God he is a Son given. The giving of him doth not make him a Son; for he is and always was the only begotten in the bosom of his Father. *Isaiah*, ix. 6.

Saul. Though your arguments seem conclusive, yet it appears that the Spirit of God, always refers to some act of his mediatory office, in those plac

wh

where he is called, in ſcripture, the Son of God. So Paul aſſerts. " That he was declared to be the Son " of God—by the reſurrection from the dead."

Paul. I heartily thank you for the text, which you have mentioned: Let me conſider it in connection with the context, *Rom.* i. 1. 3. 4. " Paul a ſer- " vant of Jeſus Chriſt, called to be an apoſtle, ſepe- " rated unto the goſpel of God, concerning his Son " Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, which was made of the " ſeed of David according to the fleſh, and declared " to be the Son of God with power according to the " Spirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead." Obſerve. The Apoſtle plainly diſtinguiſheth between his divine perſon, and his human nature: His perſon, God's Son, " His Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord:" His human nature. " Which was made of the ſeed of " David according to the fleſh." From which it is evident, that his incarnation did not make him the Son of God. He was ſo from eternity. Let me, now, conſider your objection. The Apoſtle does not ſay, that he was *made* the Son of God by his reſurrection; but only, by it, *declared* to be the Son of God. This is clear; by his reſurrection, he got a public diſcharge from all the debt of obedience and ſuffering, which he had engaged to pay for his people; and which men and Angels conjunctly could not diſcharge: None could obtain pardon and a title to Heaven, but the Son of God. Speaking and acting rationally declare a man to be poſſeſſed of ſoul and body; but do not conſtitute them; for he had both ſoul and body before he either ſpake, or acted. Good works *declare* men to be Chriſt's Diſciples, but do not *make* them ſo; for they were previouſly united to Chriſt, and their works are an evidence, but not the cauſe of their Diſcipleſhip. If men would properly advert to this diſtinction, in many caſes, it would be of great ſervice. If Chriſt was called the Son of God, becauſe of his reſurrection, he would be his own Father; for he raiſed himſelf. " I have power, *ſays he*, to lay down my " life, and I have power to take it up again." And as all ſhall be raiſed from the dead, ſo can we imagine that Chriſt upon account, of his reſurrection, would be

be called the Son of God, the only begotten Son of God? *John*, xv. 8. and x. 18.

Saul. I will ſeriouſly conſider your arguments, and read ſome books upon the ſubject. The ſubject is deep, " Who can declare his generation ?"

Paul. Curious ſpeculations about the Trinity are dangerous; But we muſt believe what God hath revealed; and he informs us, that Jeſus is the only begotten Son of God; This is the doctrine of the reformed Churches. " The Father is of none, neither begotten " nor proceeding; The Son is eternally begotten of " the Father, the holy Ghoſt eternally proceeding from " the Father and the Son." *Weſtminiſter confeſſion of faith* Chapter ii. Section 3. If, therefore, any who believe the Divinity of Chriſt, and expect ſalvation through him, embrace this tenet; " That Jeſus " is called the Son of God, becauſe of his mediatory " office, and not becauſe of his divine nature;" Let them conſider, that they are not following the footſteps of the flock; that, in that point, they deny the confeſſion of faith; diminiſh the love of God, in ſending his own Son to redeem us; Who, " Though he were " a Son, *(previous to his incarnation)* yet learned he " obedience, by the things which he ſuffered; and " they alſo ſtrengthen the hands of Arians, and Soci- " nians, by unprofitable diſputes with their brethren." This ſubject is largely explained, in the Reverend John Brown's ſyſtem of natural and revealed religion; a body of Divinity, which he compoſed and publiſhed for his ſtudents; and which I earneſtly recommend to every ſtudent in Divinity. It contains *Multum in parvo*, Much matter in ſmall compaſs. He doth not (as too many do,) ſlightly paſs over the covenants, and perſon of Chriſt; and he ſupports the doctrines with ſuitable texts of ſcripture.

Saul Let us proceed to the ſecond particular according to your plan, viz. Of the Father's appointing the Son to be our Mediator, and of Chriſt's voluntary ſubſtitution of himſelf in our law room. How ſhocking is it, to think, that God would ſend his Son to die for men; An innocent perſon for a guilty World.

Paul. The doctrine of imputed ſin, and imputed

righteouſne

righteousness are two leading and capital points in the christian system. You have already granted, that Adam's first sin is imputed to his posterity. How, then, can we be delivered from condemnation; but by being accepted in the beloved, by having Christ's righteousness imputed to us for our justification? Of this two fold imputation the Apostle speaks, "Therefore by "the offence of one judgement came upon all men "to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of "one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many "were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall "many be made righteous." Now, who can the one man be, whose offence came upon all men to condemnation, but Adam: Is not this imputed sin? what can be the righteousness of one, whereby many shall be made righteous; but the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Is not this imputed righteousness? But how could this righteousness of Jesus be imputed to guilty sinners, If God had not appointed Christ to be a sacrifice for us; and Christ had not complied with the appointment. *Rom*, v. 18. 19.

Saul. I would desire that you would speak distinctly to both parts. What do you mean by the appointment of the father? When was Christ appointed to be a sacrifice?

Paul. The Father, standing up for the honour of the divine perfections and law, appointed the second person of the Trinity, as the only Saviour of lost sinners. The Father promised to the Son, that, if he would assume man's nature, obey and suffer for his people. He would prepare a human nature for him—furnish him for the work—defend and support him—accept of him in it, and reward him for it. In the Bible we read that the Father sent him—sealed him—chose him, &c. Christ says. "I must work the "works of him *that sent me*, while it is to day; for the night cometh wherein no man can see to work." *eb.* x. 5. *Isa.* xlii. 1. 6. *Ps.* lxxxix. 19. 29. *hn.* ix. 4.

Saul. Are we to imagine, that a consultation was ld between the persons of the Godhead, as between n?

Paul.

Paul. Ah! My dear Saul, ſhould we venture even to imagine any thing about the divine being; but what he has revealed? All things are naked and bare before his all-ſeeing eye, with whom a day is as a Thouſand Years, and a Thouſand Years as one day. We are certain that the three perſons of the Godhead are one in counſel, as well as one in eſſence. Yet he hath been pleaſed to inform us, that Chriſt is the Saviour whom he hath appointed, ſent, gave, &c. "He that ſpared not his own Son but delivered him "up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely "give us all things?" "No man taketh this honour "*(of being a prieſt ſays Paul)* unto himſelf, but "he that is called of God, as was Aaron, ſo alſo "Chriſt glorified not himſelf, to be made a high "prieſt; but he that ſaid unto him, thou art my Son, "to day have I begotten thee." *Rom.* viii. 32. *Heb.* v. 4. 5.

Saul. I do not ſee any thing conſonant to the juſtice or equity of the divine being, in appointing an innocent perſon to be a ſacrifice, in the room of guilty ſinners: ſuch a ſubſtitution would not be accepted, in any well regulated goverment in this World.

Paul. Are the modes of goverment, in this World, a proper ſtandard, by which we muſt try the ways of God? Is there any thing in nature equal to the plan of redemption? Hear God's words. "For my thoughts "are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my "ways, ſaith the Lord; for as the Heavens are "higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than "your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." We ſee, however, in debts, that the ſurety is made to pay them, when the principal debtor fails. Is there not a transference of the debt from the inſolvent debtor, who ſpent the money, to the ſurety; who never ſquandered away one penny? And is not the payment of the money, by the ſurety, imputed to the debtor; and is he not freed from a liableneſs to arreſts, or impriſonment for that debt? A twofold ſimilar imputation of our ſins to Chriſt, that he might take them away, and of his righteouſneſs to us, that we may be juſtified, is clearly revealed. 2 *Cor.* 6.

"

"For he (viz. God, as appears from the context,) "hath made him (viz. Christ,) to be sin for us, who "knew no sin; that we may be made the righteousness "of God in him." Can any thing be more explicit than this text? That the blessed Jesus, tho' in himself innocent, was looked upon in law as guilty, because our sins were imputed to him as our surety; and that we, tho' guilty in ourselves, are in law esteemed as innocent, because Christ hath obeyed and suffered for us, and his righteousness is imputed to us for our justification.

Saul. You have evaded, not answered my objection, I know, that men may pay debts for one another: But an innocent person will not be permitted to die in the place of a condemned criminal. And I ask again, where is the equity of such severity, as that the innocent Jesus should die for guilty sinners?

Paul. It is well you have admitted a transference of debt, from the debtor to the surety; and an imputation of the payment of the surety to the insolvent debtor. You see, then, that the idea of imputation is not so absurd; as many imagine. I grant that an innocent person cannot be admitted, in law among men, to die in the room of a condemned criminal; for the following reasons. (1) No man hath his life at his own disposal: Self murder is a horrid sin; and he, who would voluntarily offer himself to die, in the place of a condemned criminal, is guilty of suicide in intention. (2) It would be a loss to the community, particularly to his friends, that a useful member should be cut off. (3) It would be a hurt to society, that a wicked malefactor should be let loose upon the public. The great Doctor Hall observes, "That it is one of "the best sights, in a kingdom, to see a criminal "going to the gallows." Were it not for such instances of wholesome severity, not any man's person or property could be secure. (4) Therefore, the law will not accept of any offer, which an innocent person would make of himself, as a ransom for a condemned criminal. But not any of these reasons are applicable to the case in hand. (1) For Christ had the disposal of his own life. "I have power, *says he*, to lay "down

"down my life." (2) Divine juſtice accepted of the ſubſtitution and, therefore, it "pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe "him." (3) No hurt accrued to any, but Satan; and he had no right to detain the priſoner, when the debt was paid. (4) All parties concerned were gainers. God's law was magnified, and made honourable. His perfections were glorified: Chriſt had power to take up his life again, tho' he died, yet he now lives: And thoſe, for whom he died, are from ſinners made Saints. The Angel's ſong at Chriſt's birth is true. There is, by Chriſt's incarnation, "Glory to God in "the higheſt, and on earth peace, good will towards "men." *Luke*, ii. 14.

Saul. You have, I think, proved that the Father appointed the Son to be our Mediator; Did he agree to the condition, which was propoſed to him in the covenant of grace.

Paul. Yes: And this is the ſecond thing, that makes his righteouſneſs be accepted in law for us, viz. his voluntary ſubſtitution. "He ſaid." "Lo, I "come:—I delight to do thy will, O my God: Thy "law is within my heart." "His delights were with "the ſons of men." "He was the lamb, *typically* "ſlain from the foundation of the world." All the ſacrifices pointed forth him, as the atoning ſacrifice. What efficacy could the blood of Bulls, and of Goats have to atone for ſin? The ſacrifices had no intrinſick worth in themſelves to purge away ſin; But they were emblems, or types of God's appointment to prefigure a crucified redeemer; who, in the fulneſs of time, ſhould come to be a ſacrifice. And to evince his willingneſs to perform, as well as engage; he came, and "died, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he "might bring us to God." *Ps.* xl. 7. 8. *Rev.* xiii. 8. 1 *Pet.* iii. 18.

Saul. If the plan of Chriſt's incarnation is ſo wonderful; why was it deferred untill four thouſands Years after the Creation?

Paul. In this very thing the wiſdom of God remarkably ſhines. There is a time for every purpoſe under the Sun. The tree of life brought forth his fruit in ſeaſon. He came in the fulneſs of time: The

time which God had set. He, who knows the proper time, in every age, to raise up friends to the truth, knew the best time to bring forth, in the human nature, him, who is the truth itself. The Jewish Church is compared to an heir under age; like him she longed for what was promised: But the Patriarchs, only by faith, saw Christ afar off. It has been conjectured, that Eve imagined Cain was the promised seed; for she says at his birth, "I have gotten a man "from the Lord." Which some read, A man, the Lord: But if he had come, who would have put him to death? Would Adam, or Eve have murdered their own son? Who would have been witnesses of his preaching and miracles? Who would have recorded his life and actions; for the invention of writing was not then found out? The evil of sin was not, then, so well known. Adam could have no conception of the various vices, that his sin would produce among his Posterity; which would evidence both the need of a Saviour, and the greatness of the mercy. But the glorious Messiah came, when all other methods of reclaiming sinners were found ineffectual. For neither fire nor water, sword nor famine, laws of men nor lectures of Philosophers, rites nor ceremonies, ignorance nor knowledge, promises nor oaths, could stop the progress of sin, or reform the World. He came, when human learning was come to the greatest height; and had he been an imposter, he could have been easily detected. He came, in a time of peace, when the Roman Empire extended far and wide; so that his Apostles had thereby, an opportunity of spreading the gospel, had he come a few Years sooner, when Pompey, or Mark Antony, or Brutus had been carrying on civil wars, how could his Apostles walk from Kingdom to Kingdom? He, the desire of all Nations, came when men were anxiously expecting him, as Simeon, Anna, and the wise men of the East. He came, when the rites and ceremonies were to expire; and when the sceptre was departing from Judah. He came, when the Jews were so wicked, as to put him to death. And four thousand Years having elapsed from the fall, he came, as the answer of many prayers, as the fulfilment of many precious promises and pro-

 phesies

phesies of the old testament. And, now, by comparing the new with the old testament, we can examine his credentials; and be certain, that Jesus of Nazareth, who, from the testimony of Jews and Gentiles, friends and enemies, appeared in Judea, is the true Messiah; and when the Lord will of his infinite mercy, be pleased to convert the Jews; by comparing the new with the old testament, they will be convinced, that Jesus is come, and that they need not look for another.

Saul. You have frequently mentioned the righteousness of Christ, what idea have you of it?

Paul. I do not mean his essential righteousness, which he hath as God: This is incummunicable: But I understand his mediatorial righteousness: His activeand passive obedience; all he did, and all he suffered, from his conception to his resurrection: But the most accurate definition is—His holy nature—Righteous life—and satisfactory death, these three are the constituent parts of Christ's mediatorial righteousness.

Saul. You make three righteousnesses.

Paul. To distinguish is not to divide. When I say, every man has a body and soul, do I make every man two men? Or if I say there are flesh blood and bones in your body, do I, thereby, assert, that you have three bodies.

Saul. You will have your own way. What do you mean by Christ's holy nature?

Paul. I mean the human nature of Christ, comprehending his soul and body. As he was to be a sacrificing priest; so he must have something to offer: And this offering was his holy human nature, in union with his divine person. This constitution of the person of our Mediator, who is God and man in one person, is the mystery of Godliness: But what can we say upon this infinite and exalted subject! The person of Christ is the wonder of Heaven. The Angels desire to pry into this mystery. In this sea we would dash ourselves against the rocks; unless we attend to the chart of divine revelation. The person of Christ, as I already observed, is the centre of all revealed truths, and the sum of every ordinance. There never was an error invented

invented, by ſatan or his inſtruments; but either more immediately or more remotely ſtrikes at the perſon of Chriſt. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of Chriſt's perſon, as the foundation of the Church, and the myſtery of Godlineſs. " And without controverſy great is the myſtery " of Godlineſs: God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſti- " fied in the ſpirit, ſeen of Angels, preached unto the " Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up " into glory." May the divine ſpirit illuminate our minds with this knowledge. " For this is life eternal " to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt " whom thou haſt ſent." What a ſurpriſing myſtery! The ancient of days to become an infant of time! He, who reſtrains the raging ſea, by a feeble girdle of ſand, to be himſelf wrapped in ſwadling cloaths and laid in a manger! He, who hath Heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footſtool, to be born in a ſtable! He, who is Lord of all, to become ſo poor, as not to have where to lay his head, to be fed at other men's tables, and buried in another man's grave! He, before whom men and Devils muſt appear to receive their final ſentence, arraigned at a human bar, inſulted, ſpat upon, and put to a painful, ſhameful and accurſed death! He, who is the ſun that enlighten's Heaven, and the glory of the new Jeruſalem, to have his viſage marred more than any man, are things truely aſtoniſhing, when we conſider, that all was voluntarily done for ſinful and rebellious man. 2 *Tim.* iii. 16. *John*, xvii. 3. *Iſaiah*, *Chap.* liii. *Mat. Chap.* xxvi, and xxviii.

John Gentlemen, you were too late in coming to the ſociety to night: As ſome of us have to attend the French claſs; ſo I would propoſe that you defer the proſecution of this ſubject untill our next meeting. All the members agreed to the propoſal; the ſociety, therefore, adjourned.

THE END OF THE THIRD DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE IV.

SAUL. At our laſt meeting, Paul, you began to explain the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and you ſaid it conſiſted of three parts, his holy nature, righteous life, and ſatisfaction for ſin, by his death. If you pleaſe reſume the ſubject. What do you underſtand by Chriſt's holy nature?

Paul. I mean not his divine, but his human nature, conſiſting of a true body and a reaſonable ſoul. This, in union with his divine perſon, was the ſacrifice Chriſt offered up to ſatisfy divine juſtice for our ſins.

Saul. Would it not have been ſufficient, if God had created a human nature for Chriſt, as he did for Adam? Or was it neceſſary that he ſhould be born of a virgin, who was eſpouſed to an huſband?

Paul. Had not Chriſt gotten a human body of the Virgin Mary: but in a creative manner as Adam did, he would not be "the ſeed of the woman;" nor related to us. But being born of a virgin, who deſcended from Adam, he is our kinſman, who legally could redeem our mortgaged inheritance. And being thus miraculouſly born, and not having a human perſon, he was not repreſented by Adam in the covenant of works, and did not deſcend from him by ordinary generation; therefore, he was not chargeable with original ſin. And alſo, the wiſdom of God is diſcovered in Chriſt's being born of a virgin, who was eſpouſed to an huſband: For they who did not believe that he was the Meſſiah, would not believe his extraordinary conception; but reproach him as an illegitimate perſon; and, according to the ceremonial law, he would not be permitted to enter into the Temple.

Beſides

Besides Joseph was a mean of protecting Mary, when she fled into Egypt; and, of providing things necessary for Christ, before he entered upon his public ministry.

Saul. What do you mean by his righteous life?

Paul. His active obedience to the law as a covenant of works. His life was unblameable; he never deviated from the law of God, in the least degree; but gave perfect obedience to every precept of it, in thought, word and deed. Neither men, nor Devils, nor divine and infinite justice could accuse him of one immoral action. With respect to the objection of healing the sick on the Sabbath. &c. He shewed them, that that was a work of mercy, which should be done upon the Sabbath: "And, that mercy was better "than sacrifice."

Saul. What do you understand by satisfaction for sin by Christ's death. Which you call the third and last part of Christ's mediatorial righteousness;

Paul. I mean his exquisite sufferings. To whom are applicable Jeriniah's words. *Lam* i. 12. "Is "it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Behold, and "see, if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow, "which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath "afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger." "He "was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," from his cradle to his grave. But the most remarkable scene of his sufferings was at his death. When Men and Devils, Jews and Gentiles, Priests and Pharisees, high and low united their power against him; and all thirsted for his blood. Yet this was nothing in comparison of the wrath of God, which our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered in his soul. *Isaiah*, liii. 3.

Saul. That he had a holy nature, and lived a righteous life, I did not deny. That he was exposed to the resentment of Satan, and the malice of men, I also grant: But I deny that he suffered the wrath of God in his soul. He said at Gethsemene, "My "soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," but that arose chiefly from the sympathy which the soul had with his body in its sufferings. (It is no wonder that Jesus would desire to die, when his very Disciples fled from him, one of them betrayed him, and

another

another denied him.) But I deny that he suffered the wrath of God.

Paul. Isaiah says: *Isaiah*, liii. 10. "Yet it "pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to "grief, when thou shalt make his soul an offering "for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his "days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in "his hand." If the Lord bruised him, and made his soul an offering for sin, must he not have suffered the wrath of God in his soul? John expresly declares, "That he treaddeth the wine press of the fierceness "and wrath of almighty God." "And he hath on "his vesture and on his thigh written King of Kings "and Lord of Lords." *Rev.* xix. 15 16. That it is Christ, who is there spoken of, none can deny: and that he suffered the wrath of almighty God, is also declared. Please to consider the five following arguments which I shall bring to establish this point, (1) If Christ did not suffer the wrath of God in his soul, then, the sufferings of many Martyrs were greater than the sufferings of Christ. How absurd is it, to assert that his bloody sweat, in the garden of Gethsemene, was occasioned by anticipation; or by the knowledge of what he was to suffer on the cross? Did you ever read of any person, under the greatest affliction, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, in such quantity as to run down on the ground? No no, much less from a knowledge of what they were to suffer, before it was inflicted. If Christ did not suffer the wrath of God, at that time, he really suffered nothing: For he had not then been apprehended. And shall we represent the blessed Jesus to be weaker than any of the Martyrs; of whom many were exposed to more bodily sufferings than he; It was not the perfidy of Judas, nor the cowardice of Peter, nor the flight of his Disciples, nor the malice of Satan, nor the cruelty of the blood thirsty Jews, nor the painful death, all which he foreknew: But the wrath of his father, that caused the bloody sweat, and made him cry out, "Father if it be possible let this cup pass "from me. Nevertheless not as I will but as thou "wilt." *Mat.* xxvi. 39. (2) Christ was a sacrifice

crifice for the ſins of both ſoul and body, and therefore he muſt ſuffer in ſoul and body. I grant that the ſins of both ſoul and body are the ſins of the perſon: Yet we muſt acknowledge, that unbelief, malice, hypocriſy &c. are ſins of the ſoul; As drunkenneſs, murder, theft, &c. are ſins of the body. Now, can we imagine that Jeſus would atone for the one, and not for the other? As we ſin with both ſoul and body, ſo Chriſt had to ſuffer in both ſoul and body. (3) Both ſoul and body of man are under the curſe, by reaſon of ſin; and Chriſt, who became a curſe for us to redeem us from the curſe of the law, had to ſuffer in both ſoul and body. (4) The juſtice of God could not otherwiſe accept of, and reward Chriſt's obedience and ſuffering, unleſs he had given perfect obedience. For juſtice will remit nothing that is due; But as God is juſt, as well as merciful; in order, that mercy might be extended to us; Chriſt had to make bare his breaſt, that the ſword of juſtice might be ſheathed in his ſoul; therefore the father cries, "Awake O ſword againſt my ſhepherd and againſt the man that is my fellow, ſaith the Lord of hoſts; Smite the ſhepherd and the ſheep ſhall be ſcattered." *Zech.* xiii. 7. (5) The ſon of God aſſumed both ſoul and body that he might be a ſacrifice in both; therefore, Chriſt ſuffered the wrath of God in his ſoul.

Saul. But how could the righteouſneſs of Chriſt be effectual for the ſalvation of millions of men? It muſt, upon this ſuppoſition, be an infinitely precious righteouſneſs

Paul. It certainly is an infinitely precious righteouſneſs. It is the only righteouſneſs, which God hath appointed and which he will accept of for our ſalvation. A divine inſtitution gives an efficacy to things even inſignificant in themſelves. Thus by divine appointment the ſounding of Ram's horns were effectual for battering down the walls of Jerico: But there is more in the preſent caſe, there is an intrinſick worth in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, ariſing from the dignity of his perſon, and the perfection of his obedience.

Saul.

Saul. I know that Christ was the most perfect person, that ever appeared upon earth; and far exalted above the most glorious Angel.

Paul. Arians will grant that, and add, that it is blasphemy to compare any creature to him; and yet deny his Divinity. But that the Son of God is truly God, the scripture asserts. The *Names* of God are given to him. He is called God, *John*, i. 1.—The mighty God, *Isaiah*, ix. 6.—The only wise God, *Jude*, xxv.—The great God, *Tit.* ii. 13.—And Jehovah, which is a name never ascribed to any creature, but to the living and true God, *Jer.* xxiii. 6. The incommunicable or natural *Perfections* of God are ascribed to Jesus. Eternity in the strictest sense, *Micah*, v. 2. 3 Unchangeableness, *Heb.* xiii. 8. Omniscience, *John* xxi. 17. Omnipotence for he calls himself the Almighty, *Rev.* i. 8. Omnipresence, *Mat.* xxviii. 20. Supremacy "who is over all, God "blessed for ever." *Rom.* ix. 5. *Works*, which are peculiar to God are ascribed to Jesus. Creation and preservation. *Col.* i. 16 17. The obtaining eternal redemption for us *Heb.* ix. 12. The working of miracles by his own power. *Mark*, v. 41. The forgiving of sins. *Mark*, ii. 5. The raising of the dead at the last day. *John.* v 28. 29. And judging the World. *Rom.* xiv. 10. The same divine *Worship and Adoration* which is given to the Father, is given to Christ. *John*, v 23. We are commanded to believe in him equally with the Father. *John*, xiv. 1. We are baptized in his name, as well as in the name of the Father. *Mat.* xxviii. 19. We bless the congegration in his name as well as in the name of the Father. 2 *Cor.* xiii 14. From all these testimonies, it is evident, that we must not deny the Divinity of Jesus; unless we commence Deists and deny divine revelation. His divine person, therefore, gave virtue to his human nature, and made his righteousness of infinite value. For the divine nature or Godhead could neither obey nor suffer; Yet the person obeying, in the human nature, was God: And as the actions of soul and body (tho vastly different) are ascribed to the person; hence we say man eats,

sleeps

ſleeps, &c. tho' theſe actions are proper to the body; And we ſay a man thinks and reaſons; tho' theſe are peculiar to the ſoul; ſo the actions of both natures are aſcribed to the perſon of Chriſt; hence, his blood is called the blood of God. *Acts*. xx. 28. His righteouſneſs the righteouſneſs of God. *Rom*. x. 2. Therefore his righteouſneſs muſt be an adequate ſatisfaction for the ſins of all his people.

Saul. Chriſt came to give us a more perfect revelation of the divine will; to ſet us an example, and to die in confirmation of his doctrine. The more excellent he was, the more perfect his righteouſneſs muſt be: for "where much is given, much is required."

Paul. Chriſt inſtituted a goſpel miniſtry and ordinances: He alſo ſet us an example, which we ſhould follow. He, as a Martyr, witneſſed a good confeſſion before men; for he was condemned for ſaying he was the Son of God, who was before Abraham. But the grand deſign of his coming into the World was to glorify the divine perfections, and to obey and ſuffer in our ſtead. If Jeſus had been only a creature, his obedience would have been due for himſelf; for as you obſerved, "Where much is given much is "required." The obedience, therefore, of the moſt exalted Saint or Angel in Heaven, cannot merit eternal life. *Luke*, xvii 10. "So likewiſe ye, when ye "ſhall have done all theſe things, which are comman-"ded you, ſay, We are unprofitable ſervants: We have done that which was our duty to do." If Adam's obedience would have procured happineſs for himſelf and poſterity, this would not ariſe from the intrinſick worth of Adam's obedience; but from the covenant of work's which God was pleaſed to make with him. But here the caſe is vaſtly different. The Son of God was not, in law or juſtice, bound to give any obedience for himſelf. And if he obeyed and ſuffered, in our law room, it was not from any neceſſity in the nature of things, but becauſe of his own voluntary ſubſtitution. Tho' he had a human nature, yet he had not a human perſon. His human nature never exiſted one moment by itſelf; for it was formed in its union with Chriſt's divine perſon, and united in its formation. Tho' Chriſts ſoul and body were ſeperated by his death, yet the union of both ſoul and body with the perſon

of Christ was not dissolved by death: When his body was in the grave it was then united to his divine person, and preserved from corruption. If any would assert, that Christ had a human person, or that his human nature subsisted one moment without union to his divine person; this would follow, "That there "were two Christs, two persons, and two mediato-"rial righteousness's in Christ;" which is grosly absurd. Christ, therefore, being God, his obedience and death, tho' performed in a short time, hath an intrinsick worth in it to procure the pardon of sin, and a title to heaven for all God's people.

Saul. What do you mean by the term *all God's people* which, I observe, you frequently have used? Do not you believe that Christ died for all men, for Judas equally with Peter?

Paul. I cannot believe, that Christ died for Judas, or indeed for any who will be damned. For I cannot think that Christ's intentions would be frustrated. Nor can I believe, that God would condemn those for whom Christ shed his precious blood; and purchased, not only Heaven, but grace to convert and fit them for Heaven. Nor can I believe that Christ died for those, for whom he doth not intercede. For this is plain, that he did not pray for the whole World, therefore, he did not die to purchase eternal life for the whole World. *John*, xvii. 9. "I pray not for "the world, but for them which thou hast "given me." Jesus died for those, whom the father gave him; for those he prayed, when he was upon earth, and for those he has prepared mansions in Heaven.

Saul. I conjectured that you would bring in election, that absurd and blasphemous doctrine; which a few uncharitable Sectarians espouse, and endeavour, in these days, to support by arguments which reflect upon the goodness and mercy of the divine being.

Paul. My dear friend, we agreed to avoid all indecent expressions, or reflections. Let us not revile God's word, or the doctrine of all the reformed Churches. The scripture expressly asserts that there are a certain number, whose names are written in the

Lamb's

Lamb's book of life; who shall obtain eternal redemption. Whom it is impossible for men to deceive so as that they shall fall from grace or perish eternally. Who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the World. Who shall be called, justified, sanctified and glorified. *Rev.* xiii. 8. *Rom.* ix. 11. and xi. 5. 7. *Mark*, xiii. 20. 22. *Rom.* viii. 30. They are Sectarians who deny election, and not they who assert it. Because they deny the doctrines of the reformed Churches, of which they are members. The Church of England and Ireland espoused it in their Articles. Article 17. In their Catechism they say "All the Elect people of God." The Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, England, Ireland and America, who receive the Westminister confession of faith, publickly acknowledge the doctrine of election. *Chapter.* iii. § "By the decree of God for the manifestation "of his glory, some men and Angels are predestinated "unto everlasting life," &c And it is well known to those acquainted with history, what disturbance Arminuis's opinion's of universal redemption, universal grace, &c. raised in Holland; and these principles were condemned by the Synod of Dort, When men of these principles were promoted in England by Arch-Bishop Laud, it was so offensive to the Parliament of England, that they made it an Article in Arch Bishop Laud's impeachment. that he promoted Arminians, and conferred upon them the best livings in the Kingdom. It is, therefore, evident that election is not a novel doctrine; nor are they entitled to the name of Sectarians who espouse it. I am also of opinion, that it is not an irrational doctrine. Tho' it may be above reason, yet it is not contrary to right reason. Were I persuaded that it were, I would renounce it?

Saul. Do you, therefore, believe the doctrine of election, because the reformed Churches believe it.

Paul. No. I believe it, because God hath clearly revealed it in the scripture: And it is a comfort to me to be persuaded, that I follow the Saints, in believeing with my heart, and confessing with my mouth this doctrine; which is the spring of my Salvation. I have only quoted the authority of the Churches to show, that I am a son of the reformed Churches, and am

ſeceding from their principles. Do you believe that we are ſinners by nature and practice? you do, for in our firſt converſation you acknowledged the doctrine of original ſin. I aſk you again, can we ſave our ſelves from ſin and wrath?

Saul, We cannot.

Paul, Who then, found out a way of ſalvation?

Saul. Who but God.

Paul. Will all men be ſaved, or will any be condemned?

Saul. Certainly they, who live and die in the practice of ſin, will be condemned, at the laſt day. Chriſt himſelf informs us, that he will ſay to thoſe on the left hand, "Depart from me ye curſed into ever-"laſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his An-"gels." *Mat.* xxv. 41.

Paul. You have granted me all I deſire.—That we are ſinners.—That we cannot ſave ourſelves, for ſalvation belongeth unto God.—That all are not ſaved. From theſe confeſſions I argue thus. If ſalvation be God's work, if all deſerve condemnation, and yet God ſaves ſome. The ſalvation of theſe muſt flow from God's grace, which is ſaving grace, diſtinguiſhing grace, and conſequently electing grace. For God knows all that ſhall be ſaved.

Saul. God from eternity certainly knew all that would believe in Chriſt: But his foreknowledge is not a decree.

Paul. This evaſion will be of little ſervice to your cauſe. You grant, that God hath a foreknowledge of all that will be ſaved. If he doth not know all that will be ſaved, he doth not know all things. His knowledge, then, about their ſalvation muſt be either *certain* or *uncertain*. *Uncertain* it cannot be; becauſe if ſo, he knows nothing certainly about their ſalvation, and ſo cannot know who certainly will be ſaved. Such a ſuppoſition would rob him of an eſſential perfection, to wit, his omniſcience, and undeify him altogether. His knowledge, therefore, about the ſalvation of men, muſt be *certain*. And if he knows certainly who will be ſaved, their ſalvation is certain. If he did not choose that their ſalvation would be certain,

certain, he could prevent it. If he knows that their ſalvation is certain, and doth not chooſe to prevent it, he hath certainly willed that it ſhall be certain, and conſequently hath elected them to eternal life, and to all the means leading to it, and the bleſſings connected with it. To allow only a probality of ſalvation to all men, and a certainty to none, reflects the greateſt diſhonour upon God's perfections. Upon his omniſcience, as if he did not know who would be ſaved: Upon his power as if any thing could occur that would fruſtrate his deſigns: Upon his ſovereignty, as if he had not the diſpoſal of his creatures: Upon his immutability, as if his plan was ſo ill laid, that he muſt alter his purpoſe as incidents would fall in, which he could not certainly foreſee: A conditional or uncertain decree of election, would make the will of the great God to ſubmit to, and depend upon, the will of man; inſtead of the will of man ſubmitting to and dedepending upon the will of God. You know, Saul, that the ſcriptures frequently inculcate the doctrine of election: What is your opinion of it?

Saul. Why, I believe, that Chriſt died for all men; and that all who believe in him will be ſaved. Jeſus "Is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of thoſe "that believe."

Paul. He is the Saviour of all men by office. And as the Adminiſtrator of the covenant of grace he by his word offers ſalvation to all; and hath given commiſſion to his miniſters to preach the goſpel to every creature: But he is eventually a Saviour only to them that believe. As the Surgeon of a regiment is a Surgeon by office to the whole Regiment, yet he is a Surgeon in effect only to thoſe who apply to him. The general offer of Chriſt, in the promiſes of the goſpel, is a ſufficient ground for all that hear it, to give them a right to receive him. If Chriſt were not offered to all, no man could be chargeable with unbelief in rejecting him. Yet it is only the elect who will obtain ſalvation. "Many are called but few are choſen." "The "election hath obtained it and the reſt were blinded." *Mat.* xxii. 14. *Rom.* xi. 7.

Saul. Why is ſalvation offered to all, when only few are choſen?

Paul. You may as well ask me. Why are there so many Fish in the sea, that never will be caught? Or so many Mines of gold in the earth, that never were discovered? Or so many drops of rain which fall on the rocks, and in the sea, that have no need of them? If Christ were only offered to the elect, men must know their election before their effectual calling, which would invert the order God hath laid down, in the plan of redemption. That there is an election is a revealed truth: But who the persons are, is a secret which belongs to God, and must not be, nor cannot be the rule of our duty. Salvation, therefore, is offered to all, that the elect may see the right they have to believe in Christ, when the holy Spirit, will by the freeness, fulness and virtue of the promise, as an instrument in his hand, work Faith in their hearts. For Faith is the gift of God. "By grace are ye saved thro' Faith "and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God." *Eph.* ii, 8.

Saul. This doctrine of election would make God a respecter of persons; contrary to his declaration. *Romans*, ii. 16.

Paul. No more than his choosing men and passing by the fallen Angels: Or choosing some to be ministers of the gospel, and leaving others, in private stations. If he chose men for their foreseen Faith or good works, or for any virtue or quality in them, then, indeed he would be a respecter of persons. St. James tells us, That to "have respect to him, that weareth the gay "cloathing, and say to him sit thou here in a good "place, and say to the poor, stand thou there, or "sit here under my footstool," is an evidence of partiality; and a proof that they were respecters of persons. If, therefore, the cause of God's electing men to holiness and happiness arises from any thing foreseen in man, he would, contrary to his word, be a respecter of persons: But if election flow from his sovereign good will and pleasure, he is no respecter of persons. That it flows from his sovereign pleasure is clear from *Rom.* ix. 11. 16. "For the children "being not yet born, neither, having done any good "or evil, that the purpose of God according to elec-

"tion

" tion might ſtand, not of works, but of him that
" calleth, it was ſaid unto her, (Rebecca) The elder
" ſhall ſerve the younger. As it is written, Jacob
" have I loved, but Eſau have I hated. What
" ſhall we ſay then? Is there unrighteouſneſs with
" God? God forbid. For he ſaith to Moſes. I will
" have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will
" have compaſſion, on whom I will have compaſſion.
" So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him
" that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy."
Can any thing be more explicit than theſe verſes are in aſcribing the ſpring of ſalvation to the electing love of God? From which it is evident, that your conditional election makes God a reſpecter of perſons, whereas our doctrine, which indeed is ſcripture doctrine, makes the free and ſovereign love of God the cauſe of it.

Paul. Then we may live as we pleaſe, for if we are elected we will be ſaved; And if we are not elected we will be damned, let us do whatever good we can.

Paul. This is an objection often made, and often anſwered; which ariſeth from the groſſeſt ignorance of the nature of election. Will God be more negligent than men, viz. to propoſe an end, and yet ſlight the means which are neceſſary to attain the end? You would break God's golden chain, and make it like Nebuchadnezzar's image, part of which was gold, braſs and iron, and part of clay. If God elected men to eternal life, he hath alſo elected them to holineſs. Decreed the time, means and manner of their convertion: and that they ſhall perſevere in grace untill they arrive at glory. *Rom.* viii. 30. " Moreover whom he did
" predeſtinate, them he alſo called: and whom he
" called them he alſo juſtified: and whom he juſtified
" them he alſo glorified." 1 *Pet.* i. 3. " Elect ac-
" cording to the foreknowledge of God, through
" ſanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and
" ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus." *Eph.* i. 4.
" According as he hath choſen us in him before the
" foundation of the World, that we ſhould be holy."
We ſhould, therefore, punctually attend upon all the means of grace, looking to God, for that grace which he

he hath promised. The latter part of your objection, never existed in reality, only in men's deluded brains. viz. That the man who did all the good he could, would be damned. Where is the man, who doth all the good he can? I do not speak of good works respecting their principles manner rule or end, for "without "Faith it is impossible to please God:" But I speak of external good works. Where is the man who hath read, prayed, attended divine worship, bridled his tongue, watched over his senses, thoughts, words and actions, as he might, according to his opportunities, talents, and knowledge? The thing, therefore, supposed in the objection, viz. that a man, who doth all the good he might have done, will be damned, never did, nor never will take place. But the enemies of election treat it, in the same manner, in which the enemies of the primitive Church did the Christians; who, dressed them in the skins of wild beasts, and set the dogs to devour them.

Saul. God hath declared, that "Whosoever be-"lieveth in Christ shall be saved." *John*, iii. 16. But you assert, that whosoever is elected, whether he believes or not, shall be saved.

Paul. Had you said, that whosoever is elected will believe, you would have done me justice. It is a gross slander, which is thrown out against the Calvinists, that they maintain the elect may live and die unbelievers and impenitent sinners. Hear the sentiments of the Westminister assembly, Confession of Faith *Chapter* iii. § 6. "As God hath appointed the "Elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most "free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means "thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected being "fallen in Adam are redeemed by Christ, are effectu-"ally called into Faith in Christ by his spirit work-"ing in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, "and kept by his power through Faith unto salvati-"on; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, ef-"fectually called, justified, adopted and sanctified, and "saved, but the Elect only."

Saul. You assert then, that the Elect, and they only, will believe in Christ; And that Faith is the gift of

of God. Why then are men commanded to believe in Christ, if they have not power to obey?

Paul. Men have lost their power to obey, but God hath not lost his right to command. And he commands us to convince us of our inability, and to lead us to him for the grace of Faith. "For the law is a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." He who commands us to believe can communicate with his word strength to obey, as he did when he commanded the man to stretch forth the withered hand; and Lazarus to rise out of the grave." "For the word of the Lord is quick and powerful" &c.

Saul. If the will of man hath not a self determining power to choose or refuse, it would not be in a state of indifference, which is essentially requisite to make man a moral agent; but would bring in the doctrine of necessity, and make him a meer Machine.

Paul. You have a chain of arguments as plausible as they are false.—That indifference is essential to virtue—and that a moral necessity is inconsistent with virtue.

Saul. You have forgotten, Paul, your caution about harsh reflections. Assertions without arguments to support them tend to biass only ignorant persons. If a proposition is not false in itself, your assertions will not make it so.

Paul. I thank you for your caution, I have, however, made no personal reflection. I only asserted, that it is a falshood to affirm that a state of indifference is essential to virtue; or that the corrupt will of man hath a self determining power. To assert, that a state of indifference is essential to virtue, is not agreeable to the light of nature, or even to common sense. Such a notion, if true, would destroy the different degrees of guilt; and extenuate the most heinous crimes. Tho' the Arminians espouse these tenents, yet I must reject them.

Saul. Now you speak like a scholar, these are arguments ad absurdum. Bring your illustrations, and if your proofs appear to me conclusive, I will acquiesce.

Paul. Whether they will appear conclusive to you

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or not, I cannot ſay, to me they do. If it be neceſſary to conſtitute an action a virtuous one, that it muſt be done in a *ſtate* of indifference, it muſt be performed in the *time* of indifference, and if ſo, the more indifferent the heart is, the more virtuous the action muſt be. But is this agreeable to the light of nature? is it agreeable to the notions that men in all Ages have had of virtue? Have they not taught that the warmer the heart was in the cauſe of virtue, and the ſtronger the diſpoſition, the more excellent the action was? Now, Saul, ſuppoſe, that you ſhould court a lady, and would addreſs her in the following manner: "I have indeed, madam, a ſelf determining power "of my will, I can chooſe you, and I could chooſe "another as readily; but, to ſhew you that I am "maſter of my own actions, and to convince you "that there is great merit in my love, when it is ſo "diſintereſted, I therefore make this declaration." would ſhe conclude that you in reality loved her?

Saul. Tho' at firſt, the mind may be in a ſtate of indifference, yet as ſoon as it begins to act it is no longer ſo.

Paul. This doth not alter the matter: for according to your principles, it is only the firſt act of choice, which is done in indifference, that hath any virtue in it. When once the mind more or leſs is under an influence, the following acts, according to your hypotheſis, are not virtuous. But ſuch a ſuppoſition is not more abſurd, than it is inconſiſtent with the common notions of mankind.

Saul. You really have ſtated your arguments in ſuch a manner, that I cannot contradict you. May the divine Spirit by his grace direct us!

Paul. Amen. And then, our actions will not be done in a ſtate of indifference. This equal ballance of the mind to virtue and vice, for which you plead, is contrary to common ſenſe. Indifference, in many caſes, is vicious. I ſee a robber attempting to murder my friend, to burn his houſe, or carry off his wife or child; or, it is propoſed to me to renounce my baptiſm, and become a Jew or a Pagan: would not indifference in me be highly criminal?

Saul.

Saul. Certainly. But who will aſſert that, in ſuch caſes, a perſon muſt be indifferent.

Paul. Tho' no man will plainly avow it, yet it is an obvious inference from this ſuppoſition. "That "in order to conſtitute an action virtuous, the mind "muſt be indifferent to virtue or vice; and that the "will hath a ſelf determining power." Such a principle alſo deſtroys the great difference between the degrees of guilt of different crimes; and takes away the heinouſneſs of the moſt deteſtable wickedneſs: Such as ſodomy, adultery, perjury; for, according to this ſcheme of indifference, the perſon may conſider of them without horror or deteſtation, which is abſolutely neceſſary in order to have any virtue in avoiding them, or vice in committing them. But how abſurd is this, to be indifferent about them is the next ſtep to committing them.

Saul. Tho' at firſt the mind may be indifferent, yet immediately the will, by its ſelf determining power, chooſes not to commit, but avoid ſuch attrocious wickedneſs.

Paul. I have already ſhown, that as ſoon as the will chooſes and embraces any thing, then indifference is deſtroyed, and all the ſubſequent acts proceed from influence; and therefore, cannot, in your opinion, be virtuous. As to the ſelf determining power of the will, it is a meer chimera. To aſcribe ſuch a power to it is contrary both to reaſon and divine revelation.

Saul. You know, Paul, that we are taught not to believe any thing, but upon proper evidence, the Arminians plead for this ſelf determining power; but if it be contrary to ſcripture and reaſon, I will reject it.

Paul. If the will has this ſelf determining power, the underſtanding would not be the directing faculty. Why will you not walk thro' fire, or drink poiſon? Becauſe your underſtanding informs you, that it would injure your health, or deprive you of life. You will not barter your money for trifles; becauſe you know it would be a fooliſh exchange. If the will had a power to determine itſelf, all motives, threatnings or promiſes to influence the mind to chooſe good and refuſe evil, would be needleſs. For, tho' in our corrupt

con

dition all are ineffectual without divine grace, yet when God converts us, he draws with cords as of a man, and makes motives, threatnings and promises effectual. Further: To assert that the will hath a power to determine its own volitions, is to ascribe, I know not what kind of independency to it, for if the will is inclined less or more by any thing, it hath not a self determining power. I may also add that even the understanding, (tho it hath an influence upon the will,) doth not enlighten itself; for its dictates are according to the light it hath received from knowledge, education, experience, the word or spirit of God. Fallen men, without the renewing and sanctifying operations of God's Spirit, neither can, nor will, choose virtue and avoid sin. When God converts sinners, he enlightens the understanding, renews their will, and inclines them to choose, and follow the things that are commanded in his word; when he quickens us we live, when he draws we run. Thy people, says David, shall be willing in a day of thy power. *Ps.* cx. 3. I will says David, run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart. *Ps.* cxix. 32. David's volition did not proceed from the self determining power of his will, but from the enlargement of heart, which he expected from God. I *will*, says he, when thou *shalt enlarge my heart.*

Saul. You remind me Paul, of the great dispute about liberty and necessity. My Minister informed me, that, when he was at the College, the Professors were divided upon this point. You seem to be for necessity at one time, and for liberty at another. Or rather to reconcile them, as if they were perfectly consistent.

Paul. Necessity as it implies constraint from outward obstacles is certainly inconsistent with outward liberty: A man confined with chains cannot walk abroad. Hence ignorant persons imagine, that a moral necessity is inconsistent with a moral liberty; which error ariseth from the confused ideas they have of these terms, not knowing how to distinguish between a natural and moral liberty and necessity. There is a necessity for every thing that happens, because the Providence

vidence of God is in ſome ſort concerned, in bringing it to paſs, for the fulfilling of his decrees. And as every occurrence is connected with ſome other thing as a part, cauſe, effect, antecedent, or conſequent, ſo there is a neceſſity for it. Every thing, I ſay comes to paſs, from a wiſe and overruling Providence of God, who ſo overrules the minds of men, tho' they are ignorant of his divine decrees, yet acting from ſome prepolent motive, or number of motives, or dictate of the underſtanding, they do freely what they do from neceſſity. Suppoſe the houſe take fire, a rational creature is under a neceſſity to will to run out of the houſe: He cannot will otherwiſe, becauſe his underſtanding dictates, that if he remain in the houſe he will be conſumed. Now, dare any perſon aſſert, that he doth not freely will to run out of the houſe, becauſe he is under a moral neceſſity to do ſo? From this inſtance, and many more which might be adduced, it is evident, that a moral neceſſity, and a moral liberty, are perfectly conſiſtent.

Saul. You ſay that there is a neceſſity ariſing from the divine decree, that every thing ſhould come to paſs as God determines. This brings to my remembrance a ſentence which I heard in a ſermon, againſt the doctrine of predeſtination, viz. "What avail all "the calls of the goſpel, if men are bound down in "an irretrievable jail, by an irreverſible decree; ſhall "a man be tied to a poſt, and if he come not when "you call him, ſhall he be whipped to death?"

Paul. A man tied to a poſt cannot come to you when you call him; but he is not culpable, if he did not tie himſelf, and has an inclination to come: he being under a natural inability from outward reſtraints. But looſe the man, and if he hates you, he will not come when you call, tho' it is his duty. This is a moral inability, and culpable. This is the caſe of ſinners: They will not ſerve God, they diſobey his call, becauſe they hate God and religion. "For the carnal "mind is enmity againſt God: for it is not ſubject to "the law of God neither indeed can be." *Rom.* viii. 7. The ſimile therefore is improper, and calculated to impoſe upon ignorant perſons. God doth not tie

ſinners

ſinners to a poſt; They tie themſelves; and have neither inclination, nor ability to come from their bondage, until God change their hearts, and make them willing by his divine Spirit,

Saul. If men have neither will nor ability to come out of their bondage, how can they be culpable?

Paul. Take care what you ſay: You are turning advocate for the Devils. They have neither will nor ability to ſerve God; But they are under obligations to ſerve him, becauſe they are his creatures. *Mat.* iv. 10. Chriſt ſays to Satan "Thou ſhalt worſhip the "Lord thy God." He loſt his ability to obey, by his apoſtacy. Inability, contracted by our wickedneſs, doth not free us from our duty; if ſo, a drunken ſervant, and a prodigal tenant, would be exempted; the former, from obeying his maſter, the latter, from paying his rent; becauſe, they had rendered themſelves unable to perform their duty. How deſtructive to ſociety would ſuch a principle be, "that inability "would exempt from duty?" The more men would ſin, upon this ſuppoſition, the leſs culpable would they be, becauſe they had, thereby, contracted a greater inability.

Saul. I ſhall conſider your arguments, which appear, I muſt confeſs plauſible. Yet I cannot ſee how it is conſiſtent with my notions of virtue, that men ſhould be compelled to be religious. You ſaid, that "Men have neither will, nor ability to come out of "their bondage, unleſs God change their hearts, and "make them willing by his divine Spirit."

Paul. If you mean a compulſion by outward violence, as draging men to ſermon, or ſtanding over them with a drawn ſword to make them read, pray, &c. contrary to their inclinations; ſuch conſtrained obedience is inconſiſtent with virtue. We plead not for ſuch compulſion. But if it be an obedience, flowing from a change of heart and life; a willing obedience; this is perfectly conſiſtent with virtue. There is no violence offered to the will, when God changeth it by divine grace. Paul was converted by irreſiſtible, and yet conſtraining grace. His underſtanding being enlightened, and will being changed, a change of principles

ciples and practices enſued. In like manner all converted perſons chooſe what formerly they refuſed.

Saul. Where can be the virtue of what they do, if it flows thus from neceſſity.

Paul. I ſaid before, the greater the inclination to virtue the more virtuous the action muſt be. Confirmed Angels cannot ſin, they neceſſarily ſerve God, yet they do it willingly. Chriſt our Mediator could not ſin; but, from the holineſs of his nature, when on earth he obeyed the law; was there no virtue in what he did? Yea, God is neceſſarily holy, he cannot ſin, doth he not love holineſs, and is delighted with his Saints?

Saul. Now you have removed all my doubts, I ſee at laſt, that a moral neceſſity is perfectly conſiſtent with a moral liberty. Lord incline our hearts to keep thy law. Let us draw to a concluſion. Shew how free juſtification by Chriſt's righteouſneſs promotes holineſs.

Paul. It promotes holineſs in the following manner. (1) Chriſt's righteouſneſs reconciles us to God; and reconciliation to him is neceſſary to walking with him, for "how can two walk together unleſs they be agreed." Juſtification is oppoſed to condemnation, and if God juſtifies us, who can condemn us. (2) Juſtification frees us from the curſe of the law; brings us from under the law as a covenant of Works; and gives us the law, as a rule of life, that our ſincere obedience will be accepted, as a part of duty, being perfumed by the incenſe of Chriſt's merit and interceſſion. Our perſons being accepted in the beloved, our ſervices alſo will be accepted. But to thoſe out of Chriſt the law ſays, "Curſed is every one that "continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." (3) The righteouſneſs of Chriſt purchaſed all grace requiſite to enable Saints to ſerve God acceptably; which Chriſt communicates to them, as their neceſſities require, he ſays, "As your days are, ſo "ſhall your ſtrength be." My grace ſhall be ſufficient "for you, my ſtrength ſhall be perfected in your "weakneſs." (4) It ſecures their final perſeverence.

Saul. Stop: I have ſome objections to the doctrine of

of final perſeverance. I think it tends to ſloth, and to preſumption. Let men once get into their heads, that they have an intereſt in Chriſt, then they are certain of Heaven, let them live ever ſo wickedly.

Paul. "Do we make void the law thro' Faith? "God forbid," or "Shall we ſin becauſe grace "abounds." I wiſh men would advert to the word, *Perſeverance*: When we aſſert, that a Saint will be kept by the power of God, thro' Faith unto ſalvation; Do we thereby teach, that he may become a ſlave to Satan? To affirm, that a *perſevering* chriſtian is the ſame with an *apoſtatizing* ſinner, is perfect nonſenſe, groſs contradiction! Natural gifts may be loſt; ſeeming grace may fail; ſome degrees of grace may be loſt, the actings of grace may be interrupted; But at that time the ſeed of grace is in the heart, as the ſap is in the root of the tree in winter: and when God will ſtir it up by new diſcoveries, as he did to David and Peter, after their fall; Grace will again diſcover itſelf by repentance and amendment. We do not deny, that a Saint may fall into ſin: but, he will not continue in it; and, therefore, he may be ſaid to perſevere. As a ſcholar is ſaid to perſevere in ſtudy, who, tho' he may be detained ſome days from ſchool or College, by ſickneſs, or other avocations yet, purſues learning untill he obtains the point he aimed at; So, a Saint may be ſaid to perſevere, who never looſes grace altogether, nor apoſtatizeth; but perſeveres, untill he comes to Heaven. I ſaid the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, ſecures perſeverance to the Saints. Chriſt is their Head, Huſband, Father, Friend, and elder Brother; and will he permit ſin, or Satan to lop off one of his members; to carry of his ſpouſe, child, or brother? No. Will he, begin a work of grace, and not be able to finiſh it? Will he pray for them, and his Father not hear him? Will not irreſiſtable power, and unerring wiſdom overcome every difficulty, and conduct them thro' every intricate maze of life, and bring them to Heaven? If none have entered into the way of holineſs, but thoſe intereſted in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and, if none other will perſevere in holineſs; then the righteouſneſs of Chriſt ſecures the intereſts of real holineſs. Finally.

An

An intereſt in Jeſus, and his righteouſneſs, brings the bleſſing of God upon word and ordinances. To others, they are " as dry breaſts and a miſcarrying womb:" To them, full of life and comfort. Providences, proſperous and adverſe, are bleſſed. *Rom.* viii. 28. " And we know that all things work together for " good to them that love God, and are the called " according to his purpoſe." Thus you ſee that the Saints are " prepared to every good work."

Thomas. We have now, attended to your diſputes three nights. And tho' I have been highly entertained, yet are not many of the topics which you have inſiſted upon too abſtruſe, and perhaps, unneceſſary? If we could underſtand what is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, it would be ſufficient.

John. Who dare pretend poſſitively to declare, what degree of knowledge is, or is not, abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation? Different degrees of knowledge are requiſite for different ſtations. Some truths, are more eſſential than others: But, of whatever truth any man is convinced to him it is an aſſential truth. If he, thro' fear, or to gain the favour of men, deny it; he may provoke God to give him up to ſtrong deluſions, to believe a lie, and to renounce the truth altogether. A finger or toe is not ſuch an eſſential part of the man as the head and heart: But we would repute a man a fool, who would quietly permit any to lop off theſe, becauſe he could live without them. Were men to be Judges of what truths we were to retain, and what we were to reject; every revealed truth would be given up. Deiſts deny divine revelation; Arians, Chriſt's divinity; Socinians, his exiſtence before his incarnation, and his atonement; Pelagians, original ſin. &c. &c. If Philoſophers ſearch into the myſteries in nature, and are eſteemed for the moſt curious, tho' perhaps, not uſeful diſcovery; ſhall Divines be the only claſs of men, who will neglect ſearching the ſcriptures to diſcover more and more of the myſtery of godlineſs? Shameful neglect! A curious diſpoſition, deſiring to be wiſe above what is written, is very dangerous. Such men, Camelion-like, live upon the air, and not upon ſolid food: Knowledge of this kind puffeth up. But,

is it not our duty, with humility to receive and examine into, whatever God hath revealed, praying earneſtly for the aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, to lead us into all truth according to the ſcriptures? The ſociety then adjourned. James waited upon John, immediately, after the ſociety adjourned, and they had the following converſation.

John. Well, James, how did you reliſh the converſation. Are you not perſuaded, that ſocieties are calculated for improvement?

James. Certainly: I heartily thank you for introducing me. I have ſome objections to Paul's ſentiments; which I was aſhamed to propoſe in the ſociety, leſt I would expoſe my ignorance: But, I hope, you will, now, permit me to mention them.

John. It gives me particular pleaſure to be of any ſervice to you; and, if poſſible, I will remove your ſcruples.

James. I already have had evidences of your benevolent diſpoſition. You know that man's fall and recovery were the chief topics, upon which Saul and Paul inſiſted. I thought that original ſin was taken away by the death of Chriſt. The Apoſtle ſays, "For "as in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive." 1 *Cor.* xv. 22.

John. Many miſunderſtand that text. The Apoſtle, in that chapter, is proving the doctrine of the reſurrection; and that text is one of the reaſons which he uſes. Chriſt hath riſen from the dead, and he will raiſe all men. As the head of his Church he will raiſe his members; for they are united to him: As the univerſal Judge he will raiſe the wicked, and bring them to his bar to receive their final ſentence.

James. I have another objection to a term, which Paul uſed. He ſaid that the *Indifference* to good or evil, for which the Arminians plead, is contrary both to ſcripture and reaſon. Had he ſaid *Freedom of will*, to chooſe good or evil, he would have done them more juſtice; But the term *Indifference* is very exceptionable: I wonder that Saul did not object to it, for that very word turned the argument entirely in favour of Paul.

John.

John. And, pray, what is a freedom of will to choose either good or evil, but indifference to either, until the person, as they pretend, makes his choice. Our confession informs us, that " Man, in his state of " innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do " that which is good and well-pleasing to God; but " yet mutably, so that he might fall from it." But while he stood he was not equally inclined to good and evil; for he had, in his upright state, an inclination only to good, but he was not confirmed in that state, and so, by Satan's temptation, and Eve's persuasion, he was seduced. " Man by his fall hath wholly lost " all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying " salvation." Saints, in so far as they are renewed, by grace they are enabled freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good: In so far as they are unrenewed, corruption inclines them to will and to do evil. Thus Paul speaks of these two different principles in himself. " I find then a law, that when I " would do good evil is present with me; For I de- " light in the law of God, after the inward man: " But I see anther law in my members warring against " the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity " to the law of sin, which is in my members." Confirmed Angels and glorified Saints have a freedom of will only to good. But the freedom for which the Arminians plead is different from all these. A freedom only to evil they deny. A freedom to will and do good, through the influence of divine grace they oppose; because they think that Moral Necessity is inconsistent with virtue. They do not pretend to such a freedom as Angels have; For their imperfections refute it, and their notions of virtue are inconsistent to it. What is their freedom? To embrace or refuse good or evil, when they are laid before them. And what can this be, but indifference to both, untill the person makes, as they pretend, a choice, either of embracing the good, or refusing the evil. Doctor Whitby, that great champion of the Arminians, adopts the term, *Indifference*, in a quotation from Mr. Thorndike, which he by approving makes his own. Whitby in his discourse on the five Arminian points says Page 299.

" It

"It is a freedom (ſpeaking of a freedom not only "from coaction, but from neceſſity) requiſite as we "conceive, to render us capable of trial or probation, "and to render our actions worthy of praiſe or diſ- "praiſe, and our perſons of rewards or puniſhments." and in the next page, ſpeaking of the ſame matter, he ſays, "Excellent to this purpoſe the words of Mr. "Thorndike: We ſay not that *Indifference* is requi- "ſite to all freedom, but to the freedom of man alone "in this ſtate of travail and proficience; the ground "of which is God's tender of a treaty, and conditions "of peace and reconcilement to fallen men, together "with thoſe precepts and prohibitions, thoſe pro- "miſes and threats, thoſe exhortations and dehor- "tatians it is enforced with." *Rom.* vii. 21. 24. Weſtminiſter confeſſion of Faith, *Chapter*, ix. *Section*, 3. 4.

James. Moſes ſpeaking to Iſrael, in God's name, ſays, "I call Heaven and earth to record againſt you, "that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing "and curſing: Therefore chooſe life, that both thou "and thy ſeed may live." *Deut.* xxx. 19. Now doth not God lay before us life and death, and if we chooſe the former, we will be ſaved; but if we chooſe the latter we will be damned? Therefore man hath a freedom to chooſe life, if he pleaſe.

John. Your premiſes I grant, your concluſion I deny. God doth, in his word, lay before us life and death, if we chooſe life we ſhall be ſaved; and if we chooſe death we will be damned. But doth this, or any other text in the Bible, declare that fallen man without divine grace, can chooſe life? No: quite the contrary. "For the carnal mind is enmity againſt "God, is not ſubject to his divine law, neither in- "deed can be." And ſince it is not ſubject to his divine law, it cannot be ſubject to the precepts requiring us to chooſe life, and to receive Chriſt. *Rom.* viii. 7.

James. How is it conſiſtent with the juſtice of God, in requiring us to chooſe life, if we have not power to do it.

John. Perfectly conſiſtent: If we conſider, that in our

our natural ſtate, we are under the covenant of works, in which God requires of us perfect obedience to every precept of his divine law. To the firſt Adam, as our covenant head, God gave ſtrength to obey both for himſelf, and for us; But if Adam loſt this ſtrength, hath God loſt his right to command? If one perſon borrow a ſum from another, and by his extravigance render himſelf uncapable of paying it; does the creditor, in conſequence thereof loſe the right to demand his money? All theſe commands the Spirit makes ſubſervient to God's gracious deſign to man. He convinces the ſinner of his inability to obey, in his own perſon; and by his precious promiſes works grace in the heart; and enables them to comply with his calls, and invitations. Let men once firmly believe their fall in the firſt Adam and, then, they will readily fall in with the doctrines of election, imputed righteouſneſs, and irreſiſtible and conſtraining grace. Which will prevent them from going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs; and make them ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God. And let me tell you, James, they never have believed the doctrine of original ſin to purpoſe, who cavil at theſe doctrines of free grace.

James. Though we cannot convert ourſelves, yet may we not prepare ourſelves for regeneration.

John. There is no inſeperable connection between any preparation in man, and converting grace. What ſon can merit to be born: If man can merit at the hands of God, it muſt be by ſome action entirely his own, for which he is not the leaſt indebted to God. And can man perform any ſuch action? It is in God we live, move, and have our being. "We are not ſuf-"ficient of ourſelves to think any thing, as of our-"ſelves." And if we cannot think a good thought of ourſelves, how can we prepare ourſelves for regeneration? Further, any act that can be meritorious muſt be ſpotleſs, perfectly free of ſin; how can this proceed from men, who are altogether become filthy? If there were any natural connection between our preparation and regeneration, ſuch acts would always be followed with renewing grace. But this is not the caſe. Converſion, therefore, is God's work. For it is abſurd to imagine

imagine that we can change our nature, when we cannot alter the colour of our hair, or add an inch to our ſtature; what thing in nature prepares itſelf for a change? If we could prepare ourſelves for divine grace, then it would not be true what God declares. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that run-"neth but of God that ſheweth mercy." In what member of the body or faculty of the ſoul ſhall this preparation begin; when the underſtanding is dark, and the will ſtubborn and rebellious? Converſion muſt depend either on the will of God or man: Upon man it cannot depend, but upon God, who is the Author of every good and perfect gift. If man could be the cauſe of regeneration, it would rob God of the glory of the greateſt of his works. God created the world without the death of any thing. But the divine image is not reſtored, without the death of his ſon. It would caſt a blemiſh upon the wiſdom of God; as if he muſt wait for the determination of man's will. Man in a ſtate of innocency could not keep grace, and can he recover it, now, when it is loſt? We are corrupt, can corruption be the cauſe of grace? Why do not more men receive the grace of God, if they have it in their own power? Why do not men under conviction pull God's arrow out of their conſcience, and bring peace into their ſouls? Why do men under deſpair become ſelf tormentors, and ſometimes ſelf murderers, if they can prepare themſelves for grace? Alas! Alas! Judas and Spira could not free themſelves from trouble: The very children of God are not delivered from convictions till God pleaſes. Let God be true, who ſays that his Saints "are born, not of blood, nor of the "will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man but of God." "Of his own will, begat he us, by the word of truth." *Rom.* xi. 16. *John*, i. 13 *Jam.* i. 18. 1 *Cor.* iv. 7.

James. Your argumenrs to me, indeed, appear plauſible; Yet, I think, that the doctrines of original ſin, imputed righteouſneſs, &c. &c. ſhould be treated with the greateſt caution, leſt men ſhould take encouragement from them to indulge themſelves in ſloth and licentiouſneſs.

John.

John. Certainly, James: Not only great caution, but alſo a profound knowledge of the ſcriptures, with the grace of God implanted in the heart, and a holy walk, are requiſite to miniſters leſt they ſpeak unadviſedly with their lips, and give encouragement to any to turn the grace of God into laciviouſneſs If any, who profeſs to believe theſe doctrines, are leſt to act inconſiſtent with their principles, it doth not ariſe from them, but from the corruption of their nature. The objection, therefore, which is repeatedly made, That theſe doctrines deſtroy holineſs, is, without foundation. This will appear, if we conſider the influence they have upon thoſe who believe them. Are they more immoral in their lives and deportment than their neighbours? Are they not as peaceable members of ſociety, as loyal ſubjects of the ſtate, as affectionate huſbands, as dutiful wives, as indulgent parents, and as induſtrous to provide a ſupport for them, as others? Are they not the perſons, in general, who attend moſt regularly upon public ordinances, and contribute moſt liberally for the ſupport of them? Are they not the perſons, who pay the ſtricteſt regard to the Sabbath, are moſt afraid of taking the name of God in vain, and abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul, murder, robery, &c.? Are they not the moſt punctual in offering up the morning and evening ſacrafice of prayer and praiſe to God; Catechiſing their family and training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? The advocates for free grace, are not afraid to compare themſelves, with the advocates for man's ability, either in piety, or morality: Such a compariſon, I am perſuaded, would greatly redound to their honour. However, they do not attribute this to their own free will, intellectual or moral accompliſhments: But to the rich free and ſovereign grace of God. With one united voice they will join with the Apoſtle Paul and ſay. "By the GRACE of God, I "am that I am."—"Not unto us, not unto us, but "to thy name be the glory."

FINIS.

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